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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

STRIKING THE BALANCE: STRATEGY, OBJECTIVES, AND THE USE OF FORCE IN THE RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR OF 1904-05

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AUTHOR: Major Joel E. Hamby

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Title: Striking the Balance: Strategy, Objectives, and the Use of Force in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05

Author: Major Joel E. Hamby, U.S. Army

Thesis: This essay examines Japanese political and military objectives and strategy as developed in the Russo-Japanese War in 1904-5 to determine valid implications for U.S. foreign policy today.

Discussion: The war imparts seven lessons to strategic thinkers and foreign policy makers today that clarify the still highly relevant Weinberger Doctrine. They are:

1. A state should have a significant stake in war.
2. Know how to end your war before you begin.
3. Know what you want to achieve.
4. Know yourself and your enemy.
5. Define your operating environment.
6. Talk and *listen* to one another.
7. Overwhelming moral acceptance of the nation.

In this war the Japanese government, chaotic as its structure was, was able to successfully accomplish these tasks while the Russians failed to do so.

Conclusion:

The Russo-Japanese war holds distinct lessons for historians and national decision-makers alike. It was a remarkable event in human history that demonstrates two totally different ways of waging war, one the antithesis of the other. In addition to the seven critical points, one is struck throughout the war by the largely human element and personal character of strategy and diplomacy. The Japanese were able to make their largely informal and extra-constitutional system of government work because it was composed of highly experienced and dedicated men who understood their objective and were willing to sacrifice their personal agendas to accomplish the task. Their mission, though the particulars were not shared in a democratic process, resonated within the parliamentary body and throughout their public. They conducted their war with rationality and experience one would not have expected of an industrial state so young.

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The Russo-Japanese War ended quietly after much negotiation on 5 September 1905 at Portsmouth, New Hampshire. President Theodore Roosevelt won a Nobel Peace Prize for his successful efforts in bringing the war to a close. These two facts are about all most Americans know about this rather obscure conflict between two countries at the beginning of the 20th Century, one beginning its rise as a great industrialized nation and the other in slow decline. It was one of the few wars fought between essentially modern industrial powers caused by the pressures of imperialism and colonial exploitation.¹ Can this war, fought without United States troops or resources, and virtually devoid of American involvement except in the concluding phases, teach relevant lessons to strategic thinkers and foreign policy makers today?

This study explains how this “short victorious war” between Japan and Russia, barely a decade before the start of the First World War, has important implications for today’s leaders in formulating strategy and on the use of force throughout a conflict.² In this truly Clausewitzian limited war, the victors began with a clear set of objectives and ended the war with those objectives achieved.³ This fact alone makes the war much rarer than it might seem. The war’s initiation and successful conclusion at a time and place of Japan’s choosing provides insights into the formulation of strategy and on conflict resolution and war termination. The Japanese political and military leaders, existing in a highly charged atmosphere of chaos, were able to accurately estimate their standing relative to Russia--politically, economically, diplomatically, and militarily-- and make and stick to firm and rational choices.

¹ R.R. Palmer and Joel Colton, *A History of the Modern World* (5th Ed.; New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978), 640.

² Quoted in David Walder, *The Short Victorious War: The Russo-Japanese Conflict, 1904-5* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 56.

By examining the structure of Russian and Japanese decision-making bodies, it becomes evident that both governments were indifferently organized and prone to great corruption and manipulation. This war, fought almost a century ago, shows how a determined government can focus the state's efforts in fighting a war by striking a delicate balance between the nation's political and military objectives. Even though the Japanese government was an oligarchy at the turn of the century, the conflict reveals lessons in strategic design and foreign policy with regards to the proper utilization of force. These lessons are as applicable to the United States in the 21st century as they were to the Japanese in 1905. However, they cannot and must not be applied cookie-cutter fashion. The focus here is on what Dr. Joe Strange termed "Capital 'W' War," or war at the realm of national and strategic level.⁴ By analyzing the war with an eye to the body of strategic thought and the still highly relevant Weinberger Doctrine, this paper will clarify those strategic lessons into clear guidelines for developing strategy in future conflicts.

This war imparts seven lessons to American strategists today. The Weinberger Doctrine naturally rises to the forefront during an analysis of this war on the strategic level. Secretary of Defense Weinberger encapsulated his philosophy for the use of force by government by articulating six criteria for decision-makers to consider when pondering military action.⁵ Looking at the conflict with this in mind, the Japanese leaders of the time waged a war that was:

1. Firmly within the vital national interest. Defense of Japanese established rights within Korea and removal of Russian influence from surrounding areas safeguarded the Japanese homeland and their country's future economic viability as their leaders and people perceived it.

³ Jack W. Tomion, "Strategy and Diplomacy of the Russo-Japanese War Reconsidered" (United States Naval War College, Advanced Research Program, 1974), ii.

⁴ Joe Strange, *Capital "W" War: A Case for Strategic Principles of War* (Quantico, Virginia: Marine Corps University, 1998), ix-x.

⁵ See Appendix A for the Weinberger Doctrine and Powell Corollary.

2. Planned with positive and critical foresight for war termination and conflict resolution.

Even before hostilities commenced, both military and political leaders determined where the conflict would have to terminate and when that event was likely to occur. At strategic levels the effort to end the conflict satisfactorily never ceased. Eventually, well-informed national leaders ended the war on the best possible terms, despite strong public and political pressure to continue, and this peace secured the future of the Japanese empire for the next forty years.

3. Begun with clear military and political objectives from the outset. All leaders knew and understood these simple concepts. They waged their war to win aiming at what they understood to be the strategic center of gravity.

4. Begun with an accurate status of military and economic capabilities and limitations and with a clear conception of the status and capabilities of the enemy. Japanese leaders at all levels knew, or were open to counsel, what were the limitations of their national power while formulating strategy. Japanese intelligence was superior throughout the war and conveyed a considerable advantage during all operations. Rigid censorship and operational security protected their information from the Russians, allies, and the news media. Agents gathered intelligence within the anarchistic Russian home front, and sympathetic Chinese fed a continual stream of information to Japanese leaders and frontline commanders.

5. Begun with an appreciation for the political and diplomatic repercussions of their military actions while recognizing and realistically assessing world opinion and diplomacy.

Clausewitz observed that war is not an isolated event.⁶ The Japanese recognized this and did their best to separate Russia from potential aid from allies or sympathetic nations while protecting themselves from any outside interference even while initiating the conflict without a declaration of

war. Japanese leaders were able to accurately assess where they stood in the eyes of the world and turn it to good advantage in the initiation of the war, while waging it, and finally in resolving the conflict.

6. Fought with open and honest, two-way communications between political and military leaders. Throughout the war military and political leaders openly communicated intelligent, accurate and sincere sentiments as to the conflict's status to a level that is striking. The effect was decisive.

7. Fought with the overwhelming moral acceptance of the country. A theme that resonated strongly throughout Japanese society was of the nation asserting its rights against an aggressor. It was incredibly important to the war effort and for the unity of the government for this conflict to appear right and just to the nation. At the beginning of their state's emergence as a great power, the public was overly eager for war. It is a great credit to their leaders that they were able to wage it with the restraint and realism that they did. This would not be the case during World War II.

Any government that can accomplish these Herculean tasks during all the friction and uncertainty of war, even accidentally, is worthy of study. The problem that remains is this: How were Japanese leaders accomplish so much when the odds were apparently stacked against them? Why did the Russians fare so poorly? The answer lies in an overview of the governments that waged the war and an analysis of its conduct.

The structure of the Japanese government was designed to give the appearance of constitutionality (and sometimes not even that), while retaining as much of the authority of the traditional head of state as possible. The Russians did not even maintain this façade—though the Tsar was forced to establish a limited legislative body after the Revolution of 1905. Throughout the war and the events leading up to it, it is clear that both governments were governed more by

⁶ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*. Trans. by Peter Paret and Michael Howard (Princeton New Jersey:

personalities who held sway over the decision-makers than through any defined process. Any balance residing within the government was self-imposed and not dictated by beauracracy or law. Most governments even today have a similar duality. There exists an official version for how things are done and decided, and an unofficial—*real*—way for executing missions and daily processes. The Japanese and Russian governments were good examples of this.

JAPANESE GOVERNMENT⁷

Japan in 1904 was a young state; barely fifty years had passed since emerging from isolation via the Meiji Restoration. The pressures on Japan for war were considerable; a thirst for raw materials for their growing factories, employment for a new professional military, and a desperate need for recognition as a great power in Asia. Since the conclusion of the Sino-Japanese war with the Treaty of Shimonoseki in 1895, Japan had gained control of the Korean peninsula, which it considered vital to both her economic and military survival. With China eliminated as a rival, Russia had moved into that role. Perceiving Russia as an imminent threat after their instigation of the Three Power intervention following the ratification of the treaty, the Japanese public clamored for action. This imposition of this abject humiliation upon the little island nation after their stunning success in the late war was considered intolerable. Japan invested the indemnity levied upon China, which in turn was financed by Russia, to start preparing its military for an eventual conflict with the Russians.⁸ Russian encroachment in Korea near the Yalu River in 1902-3, and consequent refusal to withdraw troops from Manchuria only fanned the flames of Japanese public opinion. The Japanese people clearly realized that something had to be done. The question was when and how.

Princeton University Press, 1976), 78.

⁷ For maps and a chronology of the pertinent events of the war see Appendix B and C.

⁸ A. V. Ignat'ev. "The Foreign Policy of Russia in the Far East at the Turn of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," in *Imperial Russian Foreign Policy*. Ed and Trans. Hugh Ragsdale (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 253.

The government of Japan at the turn of the century was a constitutional monarchy with supreme authority and oversight given to the *Mikado*.⁹ A central element of Japanese life was the emphasis on loyalty to the Emperor, which tied the traditional values of Japanese culture to a rapidly modernizing nation.¹⁰ The day-to-day business of the government and critical decision-making was, however, much more complicated than would be apparent from a thorough reading of the constitution of the Meiji Restoration. As the legislative body, the Diet reflected the dual nature of the government. It could influence domestic policy through its vote on the budget and as an outlet for public opinion but it had no constitutional power for participation in foreign policy-making; that right was reserved for the Emperor. It could not elect or bring down governments and had no influence over a government's composition.¹¹ The bulk of power within the Japanese government still rested with the Emperor with few checks or balances.

The Emperor, though he was vested with the right of personal rule, for the most part did not exercise this power. Extra-constitutional bodies assisted him in this, and he delegated his authority to a complex array of advisors. Shumpei Okamoto noted, "[The] essential role of the Emperor was not so much to render his personal decisions on policy matters as to legitimize with his prestige and ritualized acts the political decisions his advisors made in his name."¹² These advisors, not stipulated in the constitution or vetted by the legislature, were the *genro* (elder statesmen), the cabinet (consisting of the Ministers of State and the Ministers of the Army and Navy), and the Privy Council. This structure of government was actually an oligarchy, with most of the power of the

⁹ See Appendix D for a diagram of the Japanese Government. The *Mikado* was the Emperor.

¹⁰ Raymond Esthus, *Double Eagle and Rising Sun: The Russians and Japanese at Portsmouth in 1905* (London: Duke University Press, 1988), 12-13.

¹¹ Sung-Hack Kang, *Impact of the Russo-Japanese War on the Northeast Asia Regional Subsystem: The War's Causes, Outcome and Aftermath* (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Northern Illinois University, 1981), 44.

regime being informally vested in and balanced between the advisors to the *Mikado*. These advisors were not selected from or answerable to the Diet; they were appointed directly by the Emperor.¹³ This was the system of government Japan retained until the conclusion of World War II.

The strength of the government during the war was the personalities that composed this inner circle around the Emperor. They were either smart or lucky enough to balance the impulses of the nation. The *genro* were the most influential of the Emperor's coterie with a dual role. First they advised the *Mikado* on questions concerning the formation of new governments and foreign policy, and secondly they unified and synchronized the disparate and complex Japanese advisor system.¹⁴ These two functions would test this small group of statesmen to the utmost in the coming war. The *genro* was composed of only five men in 1903, and of these, two were influential on decisions for war and peace: Marquis Ito Hirobumi and Field Marshal Marquis Yamagata Aritomo. Both were from the pre-eminent *Choshu* clan of samurai descent, and provided a stabilizing presence during the war.¹⁵ Ito (who became the president of the Privy Council later in the conflict) was one of the Emperor's most trusted confidants, and was believed by most to be for peace and possessing pro-Russian sympathies. He had assisted in the drafting of the constitution in 1889 and four times previously he had served as premier. Yamagata was considered the father of the modern Japanese Army and held sway over his service. He detested the inflammatory partisan politics at which the

¹² Shumpei Okamoto, *The Japanese Oligarchy and the Russo-Japanese War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 13.

¹³ Walder, 35.

¹⁴ Okamoto, 14.

¹⁵ The 126 clans of Japanese society were a leftover from feudal days, but still had a distinct impact on politics within the nation. The *genro* and cabinet were made up of men from only two clans. They provided a method of judging character and reliability based on clan history.

Japanese excelled, and did not share Ito's high regard for constitutional government.¹⁶ Despite this, Yamagata had also held the premiership twice previously.

The *genro* were still prominent in decision-making but they were an aging group of men.¹⁷ All had extensive experience with the government, having been involved in its inception, and knew from first-hand experience how to influence the international arena. Despite wide-ranging interests and personalities their differences united rather than divided them. Both Ito and Yamagata were dedicated to creating a lasting hegemony over Asia with a rich and powerful Japan at its head. Yet, by the time of the war and despite their current influence, the *genro*'s power was in decline. For the first time since the inception of the constitution, a member of the *genro* did not serve as either premier or in the cabinet itself.¹⁸ A second generation of politicians and soldiers were rising to the fore of Japanese politics. The fate of the young Japanese Empire would rest on the political struggle between the more moderate older generation and the younger and more aggressive power brokers. Personality and the ability to create a working consensus was key to establishing coherent policy.

The cabinet shared advisory powers with the *genro*, and so did not possess the exclusive right of advice or access to the *Mikado* found in similar bodies in many other governments. The Army and the Navy ministers and Chiefs of the General Staff also gave their advice directly to the Emperor rather than to the cabinet. Failure of either the Army or the Navy to provide a member for the cabinet could either bring down a government or preclude one from forming. An important aspect of this body was that the principle of collective responsibility was never established; thus a cabinet member was held directly responsible to the Emperor and the Prime Minister held no clear

¹⁶ Esthus, 13.

¹⁷ Average age in 1904 was 66.

¹⁸ Okamoto, 19-21.

control over the actions of the Cabinet.¹⁹ This led to individual action and frictions within the government in periods both before and during the war. The passion and irrationality of Japanese politics of the day only exacerbated this tendency. This was particularly true of the military officers who understood that a government could stand or fall on their actions. The establishment of stable guiding policies required wise leadership and rational calculation, qualities always in short supply.

The cabinet on the eve of the Russo-Japanese War was made up for the first time of exclusively second-generation Japanese leaders. The first Katsura Cabinet, which administered Japanese government during the war, came into power in 1901 under the leadership of Count Katsura Taro, Yamagata's protégé. As a former General, he had a distinctly military view of the war and its problems. Convinced that war was inevitable by April of 1903, he molded the cabinet into a cohesive decision-making body that judiciously chose war and in his time, peace. His influence over both decisions was manifest.²⁰ Of these noted ministers, only a few were to dominate the decision-making process and set the grand strategy of the war. Baron Yamamoto Gonnohyoe, Admiral and Minister of the Navy, assumed the role as Katsura's de-facto deputy. Baron Komura Jutarō, Minister of Foreign Affairs, played a unique role in both visualizing the strategy of the war and in terminating the conflict. He was one of the foremost proponents of a strong foreign policy towards Russia in the government. He had long-standing ties with nationalist non-governmental organizations in Japan and advocated an expansionist role throughout the war. Lieutenant General Terauchi Masatake, Minister of the Army, was the leader of the *Choshu* clique, and would be a profound influence for peace during the end of the war. These leaders, and others within the

¹⁹ Okamoto, 21-23. Law established the presence of serving military officers as Army or Navy Minister in the cabinet. This gave the military a unique veto over every government's composition.

²⁰ Sandra Wilson, "The Russo-Japanese War and Japan: Politics, Nationalism and Historical Memory," in *The Russo-Japanese War in Cultural Perspective*. Ed. by David Wells and Sandra Wilson (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 162-163.

cabinet, had a distinct vision for the place Japan should possess in the world, and understood the dangers Russia posed to that view. The first Katsura cabinet was a highly ambitious collection of men about to emerge from the dominance from the *genro*, but not yet entirely out of their influence.²¹

The Privy Council was appointed for life by the Emperor and held the customary duty of ratifying international treaties and acted as the special guardians of the constitution. The Emperor traditionally consulted with them for their advice concerning matters of law, ordinances, and treaties drafted or negotiated by the cabinet.²² Under Ito's leadership, they would play a crucial role in the decision for war termination.

The military leadership was separate from the Ministers of the Army and the Navy in the cabinet. They represented the chiefs of those respective services, but during the conflict only Vice Chief of the Army Staff Kodama Gentaro rises to prominence. He helped formulate the strategy for the campaign in Manchuria and urged the government towards peace after realizing that Japan was nearing the end of her resources.²³ His aggressiveness and vision for an expanding Japanese Empire can be seen in his intricately detailed proposal for invading French Indochina while serving as Governor-General of Formosa in 1902.²⁴ Clearly he belonged in the pro-war camp at the beginning of the war, but the realities of the front changed his perspective sufficiently so that by the conclusion of the Battle of Mukden in March 1905 he was firmly counseling his country for peace.

The real decision-makers for the Japanese Empire codified their foreign policy decisions at Imperial Conferences. All of the four major conferences conducted during the war were preceded

²¹ Okamoto, 25-31.

²² Kang, 45.

²³ Okamoto, 34-35.

by a *genro* conference at which the major elements of the policy decisions were agreed upon before the actual meeting. Most elements within the decision-making structure were unified in their time of national crisis, but like many elements of the Japanese government powerful factors abounded for disharmony. Shumpei Okamoto perhaps summed up the Japanese system best when he said: “Japan’s oligarchic foreign policy-making structure at the time of the Russo-Japanese War was ... a small group made up of many parts under the declining control of the *genro*, with internal factors conducive to both unity and disunity.”²⁵ Japan, while entering the great unknown of war, was forced to be realistic for she was dealing with the Russians from a position of weakness.

RUSSIAN GOVERNMENT

Russia just after the turn of the century was a country in turmoil. Continual expansion was necessary to prevent internal dissent within the fabric of their society. Shut out from outlets in the West by a recently resurgent Germany and a wary England, Russia slowly but inexorably moved east. Long used to dominating a weak China, the Tsar could not abide a strong Asian power blocking him from what he perceived as Russia’s natural right to a warm water port. This was thought to be the final obstacle in achieving lasting great power status. Securing rights in Manchuria would solidify Russia’s hold on Vladivostok, which was isolated by Japanese waters and blocked by ice for a third of the year.²⁶ Imperial ambitions grew rapidly at the conclusion of the Three Power intervention. With that diplomatic coup they forced the Japanese to give up the hard earned rights to the Liao-yang peninsula and Port Arthur, only to coerce the Chinese to cede the harbor to them in 1898. During the Boxer Rebellion in 1900, Russia occupied all of Manchuria under the

²⁴ American Council, Institute for Pacific Relations “The Kodama Report: Translation of the Japanese Plan for Aggression, 1902,” (September, 1945, Marine Corps Research Center, Quantico, Virginia.)

²⁵ Okamoto, 37-40.

²⁶ Palmer and Colton, 638.

pretext of quelling the uprising.²⁷ Although Russia agreed to an evacuation plan with the Chinese in 1902, it soon reneged on this agreement prompting negotiations with the Japanese. Highly placed and influential elements within the government had acquired a timber concession in Northern Korea, and reinforced this commercial venture with Russian soldiers. Tsar Nicholas II considered Russian presence and power in Asia a definite fact and a major part of his government's foreign policy.²⁸

Nicholas II held absolute power over the future of his country, but he was an enigma to history. Many have held that he was helpless and irresolute, easily swayed by his mystical wife and conniving uncles, but as a person he seems much too complex to attribute his lack of resolution and stubborn defiance in the face of facts to the sole charge of weak character, though this was surely a factor.²⁹ He assumed the throne after his father passed away unexpectedly in 1894, singularly unprepared for the role he would assume as Russia's leader. Remembering his grandfather's death at the hands of revolutionaries, despite his relatively enlightened domestic reforms and freeing of the serfs, Nicholas was determined that his will as Tsar of the Russian Empire would reign supreme.³⁰ He donned the cloak of autocracy that his father had adopted, but unlike him he did not have the intelligence and wisdom to effectively use it to either wage war or quell dissent.³¹ His uncles were not well placed or interested enough in influencing the role of foreign policy to be a factor in developing strategy for a war in the Far East. His wife, the Tsaritsa Alexandra, held a pronounced influence over the young autocrat, but the one factor that truly made a difference was the Tsar's

²⁷ *The Official History of the Russo-Japanese War, Volume I.* (London: Wyman & Sons, 1909), 11-17. This is the British Official History.

²⁸ Barbara Jelavich, *A Century of Russian Foreign Policy: 1814-1914* (New York: J.B. Lippencott Company, 1964), 225-227.

²⁹ Esthus, 4. Also see Walder, 49.

³⁰ Denis and Peggy Warner, *The Tide at Sunrise: A History of the Russo-Japanese War, 1904-5* (New York: Charterhouse, 1974), 70-75.

³¹ Kang, 66-67.

belief in God.³² As Raymond Esthus deduced, “The key to his character is not to be found in any person ... The decisive element in his life was his conviction that he had been chosen by God to rule as an autocrat and to defend the honor and worth of Russia.”³³

Nicholas also did not understand his government. His father had died young, and had not spent any time educating his heir to assume the throne. He reportedly confessed upon learning of his father’s death, “I am not ready to be the Tsar—I don’t know how to talk to my ministers.”³⁴ As the repository of absolute power, Nicholas theoretically ruled the nation’s vast beauracracy. All power within this machine devolved from the Tsar, as Peter the Great had established it in 1721.³⁵ With a strong leader, possessed of himself and the machinery of state, it had the potential to work relatively smoothly. With Nicholas at the head it was a picture of chaos, which added to the dissent within the population. A member of the government wrote in 1902:

There is nothing consistent, considered or firmly directed. Everything is done spasmodically, haphazardly, under the influence of the moment, in accordance with the intrigues of this or that person, or the lobbying of those crawling out from their different corners in quest of fortune. The young Tsar is filled more and more with contempt for the organs of his own power and begins to believe in the beneficent force of his absolute power, asserting it sporadically, without connection with the general movements of affairs.³⁶

The Tsar directly appointed the members of the ministerial council. Much like the Japanese cabinet there was no system of collective responsibility and each minister was held personally accountable to the Tsar. The council had no system where they could directly confront the Tsar on

³² The Tsaritsa was a German princess, and thus not well liked by either the Russian aristocracy or public.

³³ Esthus, 5.

³⁴ Quoted in Kang, 69. Fully ten percent of the Russia’s male population was employed within the beauracracy.

³⁵ Internet: “History of St. Petersburg, Russia: Peter the Great,”

<http://www.cityvision2000.com/history/peterthe.htm> Last accessed 11 Feb 2002.

³⁶ Lionel Kochan, *Russia in Revolution, 1890-1918* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1966), 51.

policy and it is clear that they never attempted to do so.³⁷ This system encouraged the development of informal advisors whose rise and fall in popularity and power depended completely on chance and Nicholas' good favors. Chaos, it seemed, reigned supreme within the Russian population, beauracracy, and the mind of the Tsar himself. It was natural then that some ministers and government officials would rise to prominence and assume uncharacteristic importance within the Russian power structure. Those men were Minister of Finance Sergei Witte, Minister of the Army General Alexei Nicolaievitch Kuropatkin, Minister of the Interior V. K. Plehve and State Secretary Alexander Bezobrazov.

Sergei Witte was a fundamentally complex character in Russian foreign and domestic politics. Brought into the Imperial service by, and a loyal servant to, Tsar Alexander III--Nicholas' father--he had personally shaped Russia's Far East policy into a coherent and sound plan for Russian expansion. He built and financed the Trans-Siberian Railroad, and was a strong advocate for the peaceful furtherance of Russian influence in the East. A man of keen insight, he possessed much influence within the Court of Alexander III and for a limited time with Nicholas. His sheer competence and vision made him a voice of reason within the Court, but he was eclipsed prior to the war by his numerous enemies and his own arrogance. He would be brought back into the government for the purposes of negotiating the peace, under the belief that only he could negotiate it effectively.³⁸ His mortal enemy at court was Plehve.

The ever-present threat of domestic revolt was never forgotten within the Russian government, and a foreign war or increase of Russian power abroad was a handy check to this impulse. Still, the war itself did not quite stop the incipient swell of revolutionary fervor that would

³⁷ Kang, 70-71.

³⁸ Sergei Witte, *The Memoirs of Count Witte* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1967), 134-136.

sweep the nation in 1905 and 1917.³⁹ For this reason, Plehve's position was always an opposite of Witte's in the diplomatic wrangling before the war. His pro-war stance and alliance with the war party under Bezobrazov was key in driving Witte from influence over the Tsar. A revolutionary assassinated him just six months into the conflict. His arguments make sense only when set against the turbulence of the Russian domestic panorama and considering that he was responsible for maintaining a semblance of order, an essentially impossible task under an autocrat such as Nicholas II.

Minister of War Kuropatkin had been a voice for change within the Russian Army, but sadly his most critical reforms had yet to take effect.⁴⁰ At first he was a firm advocate of Russian advances in Manchuria, but as time went on he became more and more moderate in his views, especially by the time he departed to take command of the Manchurian Army. Witte thought him extremely astute at currying the favor of the court, but not adept as a commander.⁴¹ Captain A. M. Bezobrazov is an intriguing character within the history of the war. Nowhere but in an iconoclastic autocracy could such an unscrupulous man attain the prominence and authority to hijack a foreign policy and attain influence over a sovereign as he managed. A retired captain of cavalry, Bezobrazov found favor within the Tsar's court and established himself into a place of prominence even before he was made the State Secretary. His presence within the government proved to be a profound source of indecision and flawed reasoning that led to the outbreak of war. He convinced the Tsar to support the lucrative timber concession near the Yalu in Korea that so inflamed Japanese

³⁹ Richard Pipes, *A Concise History of the Russian Revolution* (New York: Vintage, 1995), 34-36.

⁴⁰ Bruce Menning, *Bayonets Before Bullets: The Imperial Russian Army, 1861-1914* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1992), 120-122.

⁴¹ Witte, 115-116.

passions, and assisted in the alienation of Witte. He was an advocate for war with the Japanese, and the leader of the war party, until the adventure started to go badly and he fell from power.

The lessons from the war revolve around the chaos and general lack of organization inherent to both systems of government. The following points illustrate how each system was able to either turn the chances of war to their advantage or be consumed by the events that roared around them.

ANALYSIS

1. A state should have a significant stake in war.

War should be firmly within the vital national interest. There is little doubt about the usefulness of a clearly defined national interest for a government considering the use of force or while actually waging a war. There is little rational reason for going to war otherwise. A readily recognizable threat to an issue of value is a tremendous advantage to a nation seeking to gain approval for a conflict. Similarly, a poorly defined threat to an area not normally associated with a deep interest to a nation can cause difficult problems in rallying political, diplomatic, and public support. Being forced to fight for national survival clears up the gray in any equation. It unifies domestic opposition and lends credibility for military, political, and diplomatic support from allies. Without a clearly defined interest, a nation can have a hard sell in front of it for both her people and allied governments. Colin Gray identifies four different types of national interest:

Survival interests are those for which the polity must fight if it is to survive; vital interests most often require military force for their defense; major interests most typically do not warrant active military support; while other interests will not merit military action.⁴²

Though Gray was discussing nuclear proliferation, his emphasis on clarifying the different types of national interest remains valid. Neither nation was fighting for national survival but Japan's interest

⁴² Colin Gray, "The Second Nuclear Age: Insecurity, Proliferation, and the Control of Arms." in *Brassey's Mershon American Defense Annual: 1995-1996*. Ed. by Williamson Murray. (Washington D.C.: Brassey's, 1995), 139.

was plainly vital according to Gray's definition. Russian interests in the area, while widely perceived inside the Tsar's court as vital seem in retrospect to be merely major in nature.

Japan saw the possession of Korea as vital to its continued economic and military prosperity. While the possession of and influence over Korea did not directly threaten the survival of Japan, a hostile country's control of the peninsula had posed threats to Japan in the past:

The Korean peninsula was traditionally considered a dagger pointing at the heart of Japan. At the same time, it was regarded as foothold for Japan's continental expansion. Hence there was no disagreement between the Japanese decision-makers and their opponents about the fact that Korea, under the domination of a foreign power, would be an immediate threat to Japan's security.⁴³

Dr. Sung-Hack Kang asserts that the conflicts between China and Japan in 1894-5 and the Russians and Japanese in 1904-5 were disputes between powers that had both political and commercial stakes in Korea, and not simply economic interests. Other Western powers had peripheral interests in the area but did not define matters as a vital interest and thus worth fighting for.⁴⁴ Also, where Russia had other competing commercial resources and opportunities elsewhere in the East, such as in Manchuria and along the Trans-Siberian railroad, Japan's sole interest in an Empire starved for natural resources was in Korea. Japan's stake in Korea had caused the recent Sino-Japanese War. Russian encroachment in Korea and refusal to evacuate Manchuria were ominous specters that plagued the minds of both the Japanese politicians and public.⁴⁵

It was impossible for a loyal Japanese citizen to see a Russian presence in either of these two places and not feel a malignant menace towards the Japanese Empire. Radical ultra-nationalist groups such as the Black Ocean Society, the *Genyosha*, and the Black Dragon Society helped

⁴³ Okamoto, 47.

⁴⁴ Kang, 14-16.

⁴⁵ Wilson, 164-165. The Japanese government and public did not start taking a true interest in the occupation and colonization of Manchuria until after the war.

polarize the issue politically in the press and within Japanese society.⁴⁶ The issue of Korea and Russia's menace to Japanese future well-being could not have been more clear-cut to Japan or its allies. There was little trouble in mobilizing either public or political support for a war to defend these interests. What would be a problem for the Japanese government was moderating that support to useful ends. Japanese interest can be classified using Gray's definition as a vital national interest bordering on survival, which tends to be of a clear and unifying quality. Her allies also had no trouble in identifying the threat towards Japan and acting in sympathy accordingly.

Russian interests in the Far East were also of a political and commercial character. From the early years of his reign Nicholas had seen the Russian Empire as having a national yearning to spread its borders as far to East as possible.⁴⁷ The commercial industries in Manchuria benefited few within Russia proper, and the political dedication for continued expansion in the east was not well defined beyond the wish of the Tsar and the economic manipulations of Witte and other Ministers. The major cause of Japanese unrest in the area was Russia's refusal in 1903 to continue on the evacuation of Manchuria she had agreed to in 1902 and the ominous presence of Russian troops guarding a timber concession in Korea. This precipitated negotiations that the Japanese prosecuted in good faith, despite a persistent feeling that war was already inevitable.⁴⁸ No one within the Russian government saw any issue with Japan, Manchuria, or Korea as constituting any kind of threat to national survival. The Tsar, Bezobrozov, Plehve and a select number of ministers, statesmen and generals viewed Russian presence and influence within Manchuria and Korea as a

⁴⁶ Warner, 50-51.

⁴⁷ Ignat'ev, 258-259.

⁴⁸ Warner, 163-164. In all the diplomatic notes passed to the Russian government Count Katsura made it evident that Japan was willing to trade Korea for Manchuria. The trade was that Japan would receive absolute supremacy in Korea, while Russia would receive the same in Manchuria. However, the Russians refused to link the two issues, and insisted the negotiations were over Korea alone.

vital national interest and worth defending with arms. “In Manchuria,” observed John White, “Russia also had a base of operations of incomparable strategic value for economic and ultimately political penetration of intramural China.”⁴⁹

Most within the government did not label Manchuria as this important and defined the issue as one best handled by careful negotiation. Minister Witte led the way in this respect.⁵⁰ Manchuria and Russia’s influence over the East was most assuredly worth a struggle, but not to a level worth the anguish of conflict. Kuropatkin and Witte both warned the Tsar of the dangers he was entering into by manufacturing a threat to the Japanese in this area, but to no avail.⁵¹ It was not an easily distinguishable issue. Witte wrote after the war, “It was apparent that the war was highly unpopular. No one wanted it, and many cursed it.”⁵² Acknowledging Russia’s major interest in the area, it possessed something other western powers in Asia lacked, proximity to China and an uninterrupted line of communication with which to exploit the opportunities this provided. Unfortunately, the optimistic Nicholas and the guiding policy-makers did not possess the wisdom to discriminate in foreign policy to that degree and would be unable to make this a useful asset to the country.⁵³

Elements within the Russian public seethed with rebellion, deeply dissatisfied with their government and political future, but as yet having no unifying factor to weld the populace together in revolt. While the average Russian peasant spent his life under the boot of autarky and lived a

⁴⁹ John A. White, *The Diplomacy of the Russo-Japanese War* (Princeton New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1964), 11.

⁵⁰ W. Bruce Lincoln. *In War’s Dark Shadow* (New York: Dial Press, 1983), 233.

⁵¹ Ricky Simmons, *The Bitter Stain: Soviet-Japanese Conflict in Northeast Asia* (Marine Corps Command and Staff College: Quantico, Virginia, May 1987), 28. Also see Witte, 117. Witte presciently wrote in a letter to the foreign minister in 1901, “in the eyes of the Russian people a war with Japan for the possession of distant Korea will not be justified, and the latent dissatisfaction may render more acute the alarming phenomena of our domestic life, which makes themselves felt even in peace time.”

⁵² Witte, 127.

⁵³ Lincoln, 233.

subsistence existence it would be extremely difficult to convince the public at large that any issue far to the east was worth a war. Early on, exuberance for war ran high based on racial superiority and ignorance of the threat, but once troops were on the way east and suffering setback after setback, it proved nearly impossible to convince the Russian public that this was something worth national blood and treasure.⁵⁴ This failure would provide the revolutionary core within society the issue necessary to unify the masses in the Revolution of 1905 and lay the foundations of cataclysmic unrest in 1917.⁵⁵ The ill-defined Russian interest would be cause enough for many Russians to lose faith in the wisdom of their “Little Father.”⁵⁶ Russia’s stake in the matter can best be defined as a major one, but would be hard to construe it as vital to the state. Russian interests in the east already generated little positive attention before the conflict, and the notion of a vital interest in either Manchuria or Korea received no resonance with any Russian allies or neutral governments. In fact, most outside state’s viewed any Russian motives in the area with extreme suspicion.⁵⁷ This feeling pervaded the international arena through much of the war even though Russia was attacked first without a formal declaration of war.

2. Know how to end your war before you begin.

Foresight by a government on how and when to terminate a conflict before it starts would seem only a logical precaution since ending a war is difficult even under the best of circumstances. The Russo-Japanese war was no different, but it is clear throughout the spectrum of the conflict that the Japanese had a better grip on the principles than did the Russians. Two actions are critical to a successful concluding phase: the first is to simply have a plan for how the war is to be ended in a state’s favor, and the second is to identify stakes and set limits early on, preferably before the

⁵⁴ Lincoln, 242-243.

⁵⁵ Pipes, 39-41.

⁵⁶ Lincoln, 273-275. Nickname for the Tsar.

conflict has even begun. This inevitably helps the transition to peace and the resumption of normalcy by defining where and when negotiations must naturally start.

In a limited war, negotiations to end the fighting are often just as important as the actual battles that led both sides to discuss terms. Both Russia and Japan had ends that could not be reached on the field of battle because the Japanese had never intended and did not possess the means to occupy and defeat Russia, and Russia had failed to inflict any kind of defeat on the Japanese. Negotiations therefore constituted another theater of war for both participants.⁵⁸ When both sides finally recognized that peace negotiations were imminent and necessary, concessions and objectives would be won or lost at the negotiating table without regard to the actual situation on the battlefield. Paul Seabury and Angelo Codevilla accurately summed up the delicacy and purpose of peace talks:

The whole point of negotiations at the end of a war, just like negotiations prior to or during a war, is for each side to determine what the other side is and is not willing to kill and die for, to relate that to what one's own side is willing to kill and die for, and then make a deal with the other side to advance one's own interests as best one can. In fact, at the outset of negotiations one does not know whether the end of the war is at hand because one does not know the other side's intentions.⁵⁹

There were dangers aplenty when the end of the conflict drew near. Japan had experienced unparalleled success on both land and sea for a year of war, but had failed to achieve a decisive victory over the Russian Army in Manchuria. Japan was also nearing the end of its rope logistically and financially while the Russian armies in Manchuria grew in both numbers and quality. “[The] war resources of Japan were completely exhausted by the end of March [the battle of Mukden];” Tatsuji Takeuchi observed “and the country was in no position to continue the war for

⁵⁷ Tomion, 61.

⁵⁸ Paul Seabury and Angelo Codevilla, *War: Ends and Means* (New York: Basic Books, 1989), 244-245.

another year.’⁶⁰ Russia had been beaten at every stage in the war and her population teemed with domestic unrest, but the Tsar was not yet convinced that his country had been defeated. His dogged persistence in all matters of war despite failure after failure rested on his perception of providence for Russia, with himself as a divinely anointed leader.⁶¹ Even when instructing Witte to undertake the peace process, he did not wish to see Russia losing the war. “He added,” wrote Witte, “that he would not pay a kopeck of indemnity or cede an inch of Russian territory.”⁶² Still, the nation clamored for peace with honor.

The Japanese decided for war during the Imperial Conference of 4 February 1904. The long negotiations started with Russia in June 1903 had seemed an exercise in futility.⁶³ The feeling was such that the Japanese Minister to the United States had emphasized that his people held out no further hope for peace by January 1904: “... it is evident that no attempt at mediation will do any good,” wrote U.S. Secretary of State John Hay, “Russia is clearly determined to make no concessions to Japan. They think now is the time to strike, to crush Japan and to eliminate her from her position of influence in the Far East.”⁶⁴ Popular press and opinion throughout Western Europe and the United States depicted Russia as the potential aggressor with Japan on the defensive.⁶⁵ Baron Komura handed the final Japanese note to the Russian government on 13 January 1904, and this was not answered until nearly two weeks later. Japan finally had enough and decided formally for war at the Imperial Conference in February.

⁵⁹ Seabury and Codevilla, 248.

⁶⁰ Tatsuji Takeuchi. *War and Diplomacy in the Japanese Empire* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Doran and Co., 1935), 149.

⁶¹ Esthus, 5-7.

⁶² Witte, 135.

⁶³ White, 116.

⁶⁴ W. R. Thayer, *The Life and Letters of John Hay*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1919), II, 370.

⁶⁵ White, 119-120.

During this meeting, the cabinet and the *genro* decided to break off diplomatic relations with Russia with hostilities to follow and discussed the potential role for the U.S. President in mediating the resolution of the conflict. It was a sobering scene; the advisors to the Emperor saw no choice but war with the continued intransigence of the Russians:

The oligarchic decision-makers therefore decided unanimously that Japan, however poorly prepared, should go to war at once, because further delay could only be detrimental to Japan. [They] were fully aware of the risk involved in war. ... Vice Chief of the Army General Staff Kodama anticipated that, if Japan could carry on the war advantageously for any length of time, a third power would offer its good offices. *Genro* Ito regarded Theodore Roosevelt as the only person in a position to offer his good offices to belligerents. On the day of the final Imperial Conference, Ito asked Harvard-educated Kaneko Kentaro, an old acquaintance of Roosevelt, to go to the United States to promote good relations between Japan and America.⁶⁶

Baron Kaneko was a fortunate choice for Japan. He was ideally positioned in the graces of Theodore Roosevelt to positively influence him and his government. He soon became a member of Roosevelt's informal "Tennis Cabinet."⁶⁷ His presence and personality gradually suborned the position of the American Ambassador in Tokyo by becoming the direct conduit for communications between the two governments and allowing an ease of relations that was to benefit Japan.⁶⁸

Kaneko's mission was first and foremost to combat all obstacles to the maintenance of American goodwill. In the first place, he was instructed to emphasize that the war had come in spite of all Japanese endeavor's to avoid it until it was forced upon her by Russia. It also specified the direct relationship of [his] mission to Japan's strategic war plans; ...he disclosed apprehension that the war might be difficult to terminate unless some country offered to mediate. Once the military and political objectives had been achieved, Japan would look to American good offices if necessary to extricate her from the war.⁶⁹

His mission was supremely successful by any measurable standard.

⁶⁶ Okamoto, 101.

⁶⁷ Edmund Morris, *Theodore Rex* (New York: Random House, 2001), 418. The press named Roosevelt's loose collection of trusted advisors and friends as his "Tennis Cabinet," since they often met for that game. Several foreign members were prominent among his friends and their opinions and advice seemed to carry more weight than that of his traditional cabinet.

⁶⁸ Tomion, 31-32.

Indisputably the Japanese had a plan to end the war so carefully deliberated upon, and by the end of the conference had also reflected upon the stakes and limits for the war. The decision-makers clearly articulated for the Emperor's approval what Japanese goals were in the region. Russian influence over Korea and Manchuria had to end before Japan could give up the conflict, otherwise their status as a rising power in Asia would be forever gone. At the outset of the war Japan was ready to sacrifice everything to obtain these ends.⁷⁰ This same determination is present in all Japanese correspondence and negotiations with Russia prior to hostilities and throughout the war. The Japanese built a unique amount of flexibility in their strategic plans so that when the Portsmouth Peace Conference was about to fall apart due to intransigence over the war indemnity, the decision-makers were able to resolve the issue quickly and accept a lesser result, because a failure in negotiations would result in continued war with dire consequences for Japan.⁷¹

Russia was a polar opposite to Japan in the consideration of war and peace. The Tsar gave no thought to any kind of conflict with Japan, and believed that war was possible only if he wished it.⁷² This confidence reflected a sense of racial superiority expressed as contempt for the Japanese. The Tsar himself referred to them in official correspondence as "little monkeys."⁷³ All considerations for war were mere opinions for and against the proposed conflict; little planning occurred for actual operations in the field or for objectives to be obtained. Consequently, no recognition was made for the eventual establishment of peace and under what conditions it would be preferable. The Russian negotiation policy prior to the conflict seemed to be concede nothing and take everything. Minister Witte wrote, "we were headed straight for a war and at the same time we

⁶⁹ White, 156-157.

⁷⁰ Tomion, 11.

⁷¹ Esthus, 157-158. Katsura, when taking the decision to give up the indemnity, remarked that if they lost this opportunity for peace they would never get it back.

⁷² Witte, 125.

did nothing to prepare ourselves for the eventuality. We acted as if we were certain that the Japanese would endure everything without daring to attack us.”⁷⁴

The significance of Japanese actions is simple; when planning or deciding for war; how a country plans to conclude it is as important as its initiation. Liddell Hart concurred in his observation that “[grand] strategy must always remember that peace follows war.”⁷⁵ A plan is that essential first step. The Japanese took it; the Russians did not. A critical element is to identify the objectives of the conflict and decide at what point will peace be preferable short of accomplishment of those goals and what the state will accept if these aims cannot be reached. The Japanese decision-makers recognized they would have to risk nearly everything they currently possessed to even have a chance of accomplishing their objectives and judged this worth the cost. They also recognized the need to shape the future environment to better their chances at achieving their ends not only on the battlefield but at the negotiating table.

3. Know what you want to achieve.

The importance of clear objectives in any endeavor as dangerous and unpredictable as war would seem to be beyond doubt. Caspar Weinberger enunciated the obvious for professional soldiers when he stated, “If we do decide to commit forces to combat overseas, we should have clearly defined political and military objectives. And we should know precisely how our forces can accomplish those clearly defined objectives.”⁷⁶ But Secretary Weinberger was not speaking for or to the military; he spoke to a political and civilian audience. In that realm of politics and diplomacy where vagueness and the ability to broker a compromise are highly prized abilities, the value of clear

⁷³ Jelavich, 244. Also see Witte, 189.

⁷⁴ Witte, 123.

⁷⁵ Quoted in United States Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1-1, Strategy*, (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997), 61.

⁷⁶ Caspar Weinberger, “The Uses of Military Power,” *Defense*, January, 1985, 10.

objectives for the military is less obvious and well worth repeating. Clausewitz also recognized the direct linkage of political and military objectives, “No one starts a war—or rather, no one in his senses ought to do so—without first being clear in his mind what he intends to achieve by that war and how he intends to conduct it. The former is the political purpose; the latter its operational objective.”⁷⁷ Julian Corbett asserted as well that the political object of the war determined for both belligerents their military objectives and the intensity of the warfare.⁷⁸

The establishment of these aims requires careful thought and deliberate planning; they do not simply occur. The interest of the government should be paramount, being either political, ideological or a mixture of both. There should also be a clear intent to win, to follow through to the logically ordered end of operations. To accomplish this the center of gravity of the chosen opponent needs to be deliberated upon and clarified by both political and military leaders. Dr. Strange defined Clausewitz’s center of gravity as meaning the “*primary sources* of moral or physical strength, power and resistance.”⁷⁹ In this war, the Japanese correctly attacked the source of Russian strength while the Russians failed to do so.

The objectives of the Russo-Japanese war were limited; it was a war fought for geographical and objectives lacking the intensity of unlimited war. Corbett interpreted Clausewitz to mean that a limited object implied that a belligerent recognized “a limit beyond which it would be bad policy to spend that vigour, a point at which, long before your force was exhausted or even fully developed.”⁸⁰ Both sides fought the war with tenacity, perseverance, and incredible savagery for

⁷⁷ Clausewitz, 579.

⁷⁸ Julian S. Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1918), 34.

⁷⁹ Joe Strange, *Centers of Gravity & Critical Vulnerabilities: Building on the Clausewitzian Foundation So That We Can All Speak the Same Language* (Quantico: Marine Corps University Foundation, 1996), Perspectives on Warfighting, Number 4, ix.

⁸⁰ Corbett, 35.

these limited aims. Yet the Japanese undoubtedly fought harder and with all components of their national power focused on their object; as a people the Japanese nation had something to prove, both to themselves and to the world at large.

Japanese objectives were simple and long established, that of ensuring its control over Korea and the elimination of Russian presence in Manchuria.⁸¹ The perceived strategic center of gravity was the Russian armed forces, both the Army and Navy. Her military objectives sprang directly from this source. By its geography, Japan already held an advantage in strategic positioning. Well located to isolate the theater by maritime power alone, the government could ensure local control of the Sea of Japan and the Yellow Sea by sheer proximity. Russia had no such advantage, its power base and logistical lifeline being far to the west. Japan's military strategy was first to seize Korea, defend its territorial integrity and then to destroy the Russian Army in Manchuria to reduce any future threat to Japan. Before this could occur the Japanese Navy had to gain control of the Yellow Sea to ensure the sea lines of communication remained open between Korea and Manchuria.⁸² These were tall tasks indeed, but ones that were directed from an ordered set of political priorities. They were also carefully matched with the military means the nation had readily available.

Togo's pre-emptive attack on the Pacific Ocean Fleet, his subsequent close blockade of the port and attempts to block the mouth derived from the need to retain some semblance of control over the sea. He succeeded to some degree but could not reduce a fleet that refused decisive engagement. Army units would not land at Che-mul-po in Korea nor in Manchuria until Togo could assure uninterrupted operations. The Army would conduct landings below Seoul and at Pusan to

⁸¹ Robert L. Kirwan, "Japanese Strategy in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5," *Military Review*, February, 1971, 74.

⁸² Corbett, 67-70.

ensure control of the Korean peninsula, and engage the Russians where they found them while moving north. Landings would then commence in Manchuria, consolidate with forces from Korea and destroy the Russian Army in one great battle.⁸³ Clearly there was very little complicated in this strategy, carefully ordered and clearly understandable once the leadership had articulated the political aim. The Japanese hoped to deal the Russians a knockout blow swiftly, a modern “Sedan” that would eliminate the strains of a protracted war the country could ill afford.⁸⁴

Similarly important was that Japanese commanders in the field understood this correlation of objectives. Togo knew prior to every engagement that he had to cautiously husband his capital ships and not gamble his assets in one fleet engagement when the control of the Yellow Sea was still threatened from Vladivostok or by the Russian Baltic Fleet. He understood that Japan did not possess the wherewithal to replace his losses, and that without his fleet the war was lost.⁸⁵ Equally, Marshal Oyama, commander of the Japanese field forces, before leaving for Manchuria said to Navy Minister Yamamoto that, “I will take care of the fighting in Manchuria, but I am counting on you as the man to decide when to stop.”⁸⁶ The men who wielded the might of the Japanese military on this terrible gamble understood what their government intended to achieve and risked all towards that end.

The Russians did not do likewise. With a failure to carefully delineate the national interest in the area, all that could be done was to defend what it possessed: Port Arthur, the Trans-Siberian Railroad, Vladivostok, and the timber concession on the Yalu. The political object was clear, however. Russian forces had to maintain control over Manchuria and decisively repel the advancing Japanese. The strategic center of gravity was clearly the will of the Japanese government to

⁸³ Kirwan, 77.

⁸⁴ Basil. H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy* (New York: Meridian, 1991), 142.

⁸⁵ Warner, 261-262.

continue fighting, but this was never identified or isolated for attack. The military aims and strategy that resulted were not nearly so clear-cut. To accomplish the political objective she also needed to contest control of the sea to deny it to the Japanese. This was difficult to accomplish, as the fleet had no orders to do anything but maintain a presence in Vladivostok, Che-mul-po, and Port Arthur. The surprise of the war Japan foisted on them prevented them from quickly developing a coherent military strategy.

The Army was likewise spread thin along the railroad in Manchuria, and command was decentralized. The Tsar and his advisors first instincts were to seek out and deal a deathblow to both the Japanese Army and Fleet. General Kuropatkin, envisioned a campaign consisting of:

[1.] The struggle between the fleets for the command of the sea; [2.] Japanese landings, and operations to prevent them; [3.] Defensive operations ... up to the moment when sufficient forces had been concentrated; [4.] The assumption of the offensive: (a) Expulsion of the Japanese from Manchuria; (b) Expulsion of the Japanese from Korea; [5] The invasion of Japan.⁸⁷

This was a remarkably prescient view of the progression of the early stages of the war, unfortunately Kuropatkin was never able to advance his plans past stage three, and achieved none of them successfully. The only positive steps the Russians took in theater was the dispatch of troops and supplies to the east, the assignment of Kuropatkin as Army Commander, and the reinforcement of the Pacific Ocean Squadron with the Baltic Fleet. Even then, most of these steps were conducted far to late to influence the war except to add to its human cost and flavor the conflict with an air of tragic melodrama. The Tsar and the Ministers who held influence over him never allowed a coherent military strategy to coalesce that would accomplish the political objective. Additionally the Tsar never possessed the will that would allow him to press his plans further.

⁸⁶ Okamoto, 101-102.

⁸⁷ Warner, 188.

“War is a matter of decisive importance to the State; the province of life or death; the road to survival or ruin. It is mandatory that it be thoroughly studied.”⁸⁸ Sun Tzu wrote these words more than two thousand years ago and they remain true today. It is readily apparent that in the genesis of clear political and military objectives that the Japanese held the upper hand, allowing them to formulate a recognizable strategy that enabled the seizure and retention of the initiative. All Japanese operations that occurred from the surprise attack on Port Arthur forward originated from their political object. The Russians did not correlate their objectives with their strategy and military assets nearly as well.

4. Know yourself and your enemy.

Sun Tzu concluded his chapter on terrain by stating “[know] the enemy, know yourself; your victory will never be endangered. Know the ground, know the weather; your victory will then be total.”⁸⁹ An accurate sense of friendly capabilities and limitations and the same for those of the enemy fits this bill. The nature of intelligence pervades all that governments do in war and peace. “[It] is at once inseparable from command and operations,” dictates a Marine Corps doctrinal publication.⁹⁰ It is striking to note that through this entire period that while the Japanese acted in a coherent and ruthlessly rational fashion, the Russians simply reacted. This was not a preordained happening, but the fruit of superior collection, analysis and use of intelligence. The Japanese dictatorially controlled all forms of intelligence to their advantage. The Russians did not.

The Japanese could wield their entire military strength in the conflict with Russia, having as yet no far flung empire to defend other than the island of Formosa. The Army, organized and

⁸⁸ Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, trans. by Samuel B. Griffith (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 63.

⁸⁹ Sun Tzu, 129.

⁹⁰ United States Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 3, Intelligence*, (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997), 1.

trained by the Germans in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War, stood at 850,000 trained men (including reserves), organized into 13 divisions, two cavalry brigades, and two artillery brigades. Effective strength when deployed into the field constituted 257,000 infantry, 11,000 cavalry, and 894 guns of all calibers.⁹¹ All of their equipment and training was of the most up to date available, with a distinct shortage of machine-guns that would be corrected after hard field experience. The Japanese supply system was well organized for the day and benefited from the relatively short lines of communications to Manchuria and Korea.⁹² The Army went to war in Manchuria under the unified command of Marshal Oyama. It also had several weaknesses not readily apparent. First, its doctrine was untested in modern war and the survival of the Army in battle would rest on the ability of its men and officers to adapt that doctrine to reality. Second, its logistics and medical systems would be sorely strained by the rigors of mass battle.

The Japanese Navy patterned itself after the British and possessed a first class array of capital ships. Her officers, the most promising of them trained in England, were deeply influenced by the writings of Mahan and trained with a furious energy to catch up to the standard of the modern world.⁹³ After the humiliation of the Sino-Japanese War, this energy was put to preparing for a decisive fleet engagement with the Russians. The Navy consisted of six battleships, six armored cruisers, and 14 protected cruisers. All were recently built and in excellent condition.⁹⁴ With good vessels and equipment, professional officers, and a dedicated population of sailors, the Imperial Navy was a unique instrument of national power. Organized into three squadrons by type under the command of Admiral Togo, it still had a flaw. It could not risk heavy losses in anything short of a

⁹¹ Richard Connaughton. *The War of the Rising Sun and Tumbling Bear* (London: Routledge, 1991), 13.

⁹² Connaughton, 15.

⁹³ Warner, 47.

⁹⁴ Sydney Tyler, *The Japan Russian War* (Philadelphia: P.W. Zeigler, 1905), 40.

decisive fleet engagement. While Japan possessed excellent shipyards to repair and refit warships, the nation could not produce capital ships. It purchased most of them from Britain or other European nations, even taking possession of two cruisers built for Argentina in Genoa on 4 January 1904, when war appeared imminent.⁹⁵

Nationally there was a great sense of unity. The press and ultra-nationalist parties were excessively eager for war. Contemporary newspapers were almost unanimously behind the nation and assisted in securing popular approval for the coming conflict with Russia, and in maintaining that approval even after indecisive victories and heavy casualties.⁹⁶ Still this strength was also a weakness, for the Japanese decision-makers, being in true possession of the facts of the situation, were much more reluctant to enter into the war, and also less than candid about local reverses and losses. When the battleships *Hatsuse* and *Yashima* were lost to mines outside Port Arthur on 15 May 1904, the Japanese suppressed the information and released only the loss of *Hatsuse* (whose sinking had been witnessed by the Russians). *Yashima*'s sinking was kept secret from the Japanese nation and world for almost a year.⁹⁷ Foreign journalists and military observers were kept bottled up either in Tokyo or Nagasaki, and were scrupulously supervised when with the Army ashore. News stories were carefully and completely censored. Sydney Tyler, writing at the time, noted, "We now know something of the strength and the disposition of the Japanese forces, although right up to the last moment before the general advance only the smallest items of information were allowed to pass through the narrow-meshed net of the censorship."⁹⁸ While unexploited by the

⁹⁵ *The New York Times*, January 4, 1904.

⁹⁶ Okamoto, 86-88. The socialist papers were the sole exception. Governmental control and censorship of these papers increased as the war wore on. Several editors and writers served prison terms for unpopular opinions or dissent with official accounts of the war.

⁹⁷ Warner, 300-303.

⁹⁸ Tyler, 84-85.

Russians, this disparity of opinion and knowledge between the decision-makers and the public would cause grave difficulties in the aftermath of the peace process.

Another weakness of Japan was rooted in the economy and general state of finances. Still growing its industrial base, Japan had not yet evolved a self-sufficient economy. Dependant on credit and loans from abroad, this lack of funds was a critical element in the final decision for peace. Until Japan's first victory in the field at the Battle of the Yalu, the government did not have sufficient financial backing for the war. In January 1904 Japan had failed to receive British approval for a loan; after the battle in May, Japanese loans were over-subscribed in both New York and London.⁹⁹ By the summer of 1905, with money rapidly running out, Japan simply could not afford another year of war.

The Russians had only the barest of information concerning their Japanese opponents. Their estimates consisted only of inaccurate numbers of divisions and capital ship dispositions. Most people and government officials anticipated an easy victory, and based this feeling on their sense of racial superiority. A single officer on the Russian general staff was detailed with collecting and analyzing intelligence on the Japanese. Only General Kuropatkin, who had visited Japan in 1903, had an inkling that they were grossly underestimating the caliber and capabilities of both the Japanese Navy and Army.¹⁰⁰ The Tsar dismissed these observations. "What the Russian optimists failed to understand was that their government was about to go to war not with just another government but with an entire people."¹⁰¹ Consequently, Russian generals and admirals went into battle completely unapprised of who their opponents were, what they were capable of, and what opportunities Japanese weaknesses afforded them. This failure to know their enemy caused Russian

⁹⁹ Warner, 287.

¹⁰⁰ Simmons, 37-38.

¹⁰¹ Warner, 190.

planners to rely on hopelessly inaccurate and out-dated figures of Japanese strength leading to a decision to use the garrison troops already posted to the east instead of sending their best troops from the west. The Russians also discounted the efficiency of the Japanese fleet based on scanty reports, and underestimated the threat the Japanese could pose to the vital Trans-Siberian Railroad.¹⁰² Unaware of Japanese weaknesses, it was assumed that the inherent superiority of the Russian soldier and sailor was more than enough to prevail in any conflict.

Russia faced a unique problem in defending Manchuria from attack. The Army consisted of 4,541,000 men in total, with over a million on active service and organized into 29 corps. Of this number only six European corps and four reserve Siberian corps would take part in operations against the Japanese.¹⁰³ Placing an exact number of Russian troops available in the far east at the commencement of hostilities is difficult, but most sources agree that roughly 60-80,000 infantry, 3,000 cavalry, and 164 guns were posted between Port Arthur, Vladivostok, and Harbin.¹⁰⁴ This number increased slowly for the first months of the war, as the Russian railway was insufficient for rapid reinforcement. Training was uniformly poor, with sparse equipment and logistics. The British Official History observed scathingly, “[a] peculiarity of the Russian soldier is that in both peace time and in the field he carries his bayonet fixed, and this, together with an inadequate attention to rifle shooting, naturally inclined him to place his faith in cold steel rather than in bullets.”¹⁰⁵ Despite Kuropatkin’s improvements, Russian military doctrine was not properly disseminated and trained, and even if it had been was more reflective of the Napoleonic era than the modern war which they would be fighting.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² Simmons, 38-39.

¹⁰³ *Official History*, I, 25-26.

¹⁰⁴ Connaughton, 15-16.

¹⁰⁵ *Official History*, I, 28.

¹⁰⁶ Menning, 139-142.

The Army's most critical deficiency was in its leadership. The officer corps was advanced by nepotism and political favor, with little attempt to build a cadre of professionals. Additionally, Russian commanders suffered immediately from a defensive mindset, coupled with a realization that Japan possessed the initiative.¹⁰⁷ Bruce Menning observed "the Russian high command came to the Far East with a Napoleonic understanding of operations which had been outmoded by the pace of technological change and the new methods for the conduct of battles and operations."¹⁰⁸ Additionally, commanders in the east faced a challenging system of command and control. The Navy did not possess a joint command structure with the Army. The Army's efforts were divided between the garrison at Port Arthur and Kuropatkin's force in Manchuria, and he shared authority over Port Arthur and Vladivostok with Viceroy Alexiev. As events transpired, each commander was isolated and little effective coordination took place.

The final major deficiency was in the Russian line of communications. The Trans-Siberian Railroad, as yet uncompleted by the beginning of hostilities, stretched 8,000 kilometers across the continent. Single-tracked, and notoriously unreliable, it could transport only 20,000 troops a month, and supplies took fifty days to travel to Liao-yang. Additionally, the tracks had not yet bypassed Lake Baikal, and troops and supplies had to be unloaded and marched or hauled either across the lake's frozen surface or around the obstacle. *The New York Times* commented that according to a British military observer the railroad would break down in hopeless confusion after a week of wartime pressure.¹⁰⁹ This would not prove exactly true, but it came very close to the mark and remained a great handicap to effective Russian operations. The Japanese would make them pay dearly for these flaws.

¹⁰⁷ Connaughton, 19.

¹⁰⁸ Menning, 198.

¹⁰⁹ *The New York Times*, 8 January 1904. Also see Menning, 154.

The Russians suffered from similar deficiencies in the fleet, though possessed of a numerical parity in capital ships. The Navy had seven battleships and eleven armored cruisers, four of the latter being at Vladivostok. Russia, while capable of building its own ships, had a large number of foreign-built vessels varying widely in design and capability. Its ships were built for global purposes, and thus needed range more than armor.¹¹⁰ Additionally, during four winter months the channel at Vladivostok could be kept open only by icebreakers. The port's isolation from the central theater of the war rendered it useless for a refit site, though it would serve most efficiently as a base for commerce raiders. Port Arthur, where the main portion of the fleet resided, lacked a complete naval dockyard and could not repair cruisers or battleships. The fleet's total supply of coal was collocated at Port Arthur, thus limiting mobility for long range cruises. The sailors of the Russian fleet were conscripts and lacked a professionalism their officers did not supply. The officers of the fleet were an unhappy group, and again depended on their advancement based on "who they knew, rather than what they knew."¹¹¹ Other than a regrettable few, the officers took little initiative to master their trade and innovate with their admittedly scanty resources.

The Japanese intelligence structure was immense with a global reach. It encompassed the collection of intelligence from Russia's own capital and in Europe, native Chinese and Korean agents in the theater, the press and innovative collection assets. A Japanese agent in St. Petersburg even penetrated the Russian War Ministry. Every battalion that arrived in the east along the railway was quickly picked up and tracked by Japanese intelligence, providing clear capabilities and troop strength to Japanese planners.¹¹² The Japanese high command used these assets to devise symmetrical and asymmetrical threats to the enemy. Millions of yen went into the Russian

¹¹⁰ Tyler, 43-44. Russian ships had larger coalbunkers for increased steaming range with a consequent trade-off in protective armor.

¹¹¹ Connaughton, 21.

revolutionary movement to divert attention away from the Manchurian war.¹¹³ The Russians were exceptionally casual about operational security and no effort went into censoring the press. Russian ship and troop movements were openly reported in the world press, which the Japanese used to their benefit.¹¹⁴ An analysis of wartime intelligence concluded:

Intelligence was used strategically to estimate enemy intentions in theater and to focus collection for operational intelligence use. A worldwide intelligence collection and reporting architecture was developed with the goal of providing finished intelligence to operational decision-makers in the Imperial Japanese Navy ... Japanese leaders developed strategies based on in depth knowledge of enemy personalities.¹¹⁵

Japanese leaders at the strategic, operational, and tactical level went into the conflict with a rich knowledge of the enemy and the terrain they would face him on. Critical knowledge of the ice at Vladivostok and the incomplete status of the Trans-Siberian Railroad assisted the Japanese in determining the timing for initiating operations. The only limits to the exploitation of this information were the preconceptions of commanders. General Nogi, who had taken Port Arthur in a single day in the Sino-Japanese War, certainly underestimated the defenses extant in the port but not for a lack of knowledge of troop strength, morale or fortifications.¹¹⁶ Usually, the flaws in the Japanese attack plans hinged on their own sense of racial superiority to the Russians. Obviously, the Japanese overestimated the strength of Russian will and devotion to their cause in the Far East, but equally apparent was the Russian underestimation of their foe. The Tsarist mistake would prove more critical.

5. Define your operating environment.

¹¹² Warner, 174-180.

¹¹³ Simmons, 38.

¹¹⁴ *The New York Times*, 15 February 1904.

¹¹⁵ Robert D. Gourley. *The Secret Lessons of the Russo-Japanese War* (Marine Corps Command and Staff College: Quantico, Virginia, 1997), 41-42.

¹¹⁶ Warner, 236-237.

Having an appreciation for the political and diplomatic repercussions of military actions while recognizing and realistically assessing world opinion and diplomacy is essential. A nation must understand the environment in which it is to wage a conflict, and to be effective must mold those same surroundings to suit if they are unfavorable. Dr. Strange discussed the choice nations must make when formulating strategy:

Once the likely nature of a given conflict is *determined*, along with the probable consequences thereof given this ... national strategy ... practitioners of Capital “W” war might not like what they see (or more correctly foresee). In this case, they will have to reconsider entry into the conflict (if they have a choice), or consider ways and means of altering, or *shaping*, the nature of their conflict more to their advantage.¹¹⁷

This is what the Japanese oligarchy did while planning for and waging their war against the Russians. Throughout the conflict Russia only made one distinct and concerted effort to shape their environment vis-à-vis Japan and that was with the agreement with China to evacuate Russian troops from Manchuria in 1902. That effort failed when the Tsar broke this agreement contributing to precipitating a war he did not want and had not planned.¹¹⁸

As soon as Japan identified Russia as its most likely adversary after the Three-Power Intervention in 1895, the government began separating Russia from allies and potential aid. Baron Komura began seeking an arrangement if not an alliance with Britain, while Ito favored a settlement with the Russians to forestall difficulties. Fortunately, Britain also sought to check Russian expansion and the threat to its own interests in India and China, and for its own reasons wished to keep Japan and Russia antagonistic to one another.¹¹⁹ In April of 1902, the Anglo-Japanese alliance was signed, a signal coup for the struggling Japanese Empire. The wording of the agreement seemed to

¹¹⁷ Strange, 11. Emphasis in original.

¹¹⁸ Ignat’ev, 256-257.

ensure that Britain would not have to join into any conflict if it did not so wish, but also deprived Russia of their European allies.¹²⁰ It also allowed Japan to consolidate its hold over Korea and join the ranks of great powers. Russia quickly tried to reconcile with China after the alliance was signed, but conflicted interests within the Tsar's court led to the repudiation of the evacuation agreement and further estranged the Japanese.

The Japanese were in the favorable position of being the underdog in the struggle over Korea. In the international press, reports and articles were usually unabashedly favorable. When placed in comparison to the Chinese or the Koreans, the industriousness, progress, and seriousness in which Japan propelled itself into the future were exceedingly impressive to an outsider. Most Westerners knew little of Japan or the East, but the images painted of them were that of "a gallant island race," with a quite conscious reference to the British people.¹²¹ Aided by their devoted attention to secrecy and keen operational security, the Japanese government was quick to take advantage of this perception. President Theodore Roosevelt also believed the Japanese were a cut above the average Asian and admired their pluck and courage.¹²² Baron Kaneko used the President's preconceptions about his country to their best advantage, and assisted in the education

¹¹⁹ Kurt Kuhlman, "The Renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1905: Britain's Response to Russian Expansion in Asia" (unpublished research paper, Duke University, 9 Jan 1992) Internet: <http://www.warhorsesim.com/papers/Renewal.htm>, last accessed 08 February 2002, 5-6.

¹²⁰ Warner, 139-143. The alliance only obligated Britain to enter a war if Japan was attacked by a third party, thus ensuring that no European power would intervene on Russia's behalf without risking war with England. Japanese ambassador Hayashi wrote, "[the] alliance was really an epoch making event." Ito, favoring an agreement with Russia instead, was in St. Petersburg while Hayashi was brokering the deal. He lost vital influence due to his anti-war views on this matter.

¹²¹ Walder, 30.

¹²² Tyler Dennett. *Roosevelt and the Russo-Japanese War* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1925), 159. This feeling increased as war wore on, with the assistance of Baron Kaneko. Roosevelt saw the Japanese much similar to the British view, that of a handy check to Russian expansion. He did have some reservations when it appeared that the Japanese would overmatch the Russians and upset that balance. Also see Morris, 229.

process.¹²³ All of this assisted with the isolation of Russia diplomatically and politically, and ensured that when Russia squared off against the forces of Japan, it would be on their merits alone. The Japanese were supremely confident, with their own racial bias, that this being the case the war would be more than an even match.

This favorable situation Japan engineered for herself through a variety of diplomatic and political means gave the country a unique flexibility in prosecuting their conflict. Once the government decided for war, preparation for attacks both on sea and on land were relatively complete. To seize the initiative both physically and psychologically, Japan had to act quickly and secure a decisive victory. Normally, a nation that attacks first and without a declaration of war is branded as the aggressor nation. This was not so with the Japanese at Port Arthur. Surprise over the Russian fleet was crucial to obtaining local control of the Yellow Sea, and the paralysis this blow produced over the Russian fleet eventually proved impossible to overcome despite the fact that a general fleet engagement did not occur at or near Port Arthur.¹²⁴ Instead of reacting negatively to a treacherous Japanese surprise attack, the European community, United States, and international press behaved as if the Russians had indeed brought it on themselves. On 4 January 1904, the *New York Times* quoted a correspondent as saying, “don’t look for a declaration of war ... the Japanese are quite determined.”¹²⁵ Signs for war were readily apparent and most of the world’s sympathies lay with Japan. Russia was quite unable to combat this kind of political and diplomatic preparation. Japan was only able to initiate this kind of attack because it had laid the critical groundwork necessary to avoid an international backlash. This attack might have been militarily necessary, yet it

¹²³ Tomion, 32-34.

¹²⁴ Patrick Morgan. “Examples of Strategic Surprise in the Far East.” in *Strategic Military Surprise: Incentives and Opportunities*, ed. by Klaus Knorr and Patrick Morgan (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1983), 44-45.

¹²⁵ *The New York Times*, 4 January 1904.

also posed political and strategic risks for a nation that had not carefully arranged world opinion and diplomacy for its actions.

The linkage of the military objectives and means to the political objective is essential, yet not all leaders realize its importance during the conduct of military operations. The operational and tactical commander must always be aware of and tailor their operation to the achievement of the political objective. Warfare without this limiting factor often devolves into mutually supporting madness. As Clausewitz declared, “The political object is the goal, war is the means of reaching it, and means can never be considered in isolation from their purpose.”¹²⁶ The Japanese never took a step in this conflict without carefully deliberating its effect in the accomplishment of the overall objective, while the same cannot be said of Russian commanders. Without carefully shaping the battlefield environment, leaders can expect victory only from an opponent less skilled than themselves. Fortune does not usually favor the stupid.

6. Talk and *listen* to one another.

This means simply that honest and open communications between political and military leaders must be an overriding concern throughout the spectrum of operations. In articulating his philosophy on when the use of force was justified and necessary, Caspar Weinberger wrote, “The relationship between our objectives and the forces we have committed—their size, composition, and disposition—must be continually reassessed and adjusted if necessary.”¹²⁷ Leaders at all levels need to be able to communicate their assessments and recommendations to both senior and subordinate alike. This seems hardest when political leaders attempt to convey messages to their military and vice versa. The social culture of politics and the military value different things, and fostering open and honest communications is difficult even during peace. In war, the constant reassessment of

¹²⁶ Clausewitz, 87.

objectives and strategy depends on the integrity of this exchange of ideas. Leaders have an inherent responsibility not to misrepresent their view, and structure their recommendations towards what is best for the country. The unity of purpose those leaders possess is critical towards this end.

During the war, the Japanese had a better environment in which to establish this reevaluation of strategy. Nothing about the Japanese system cultivates a favorable reaction to bad news, but most of Japan's major news during the war was positive. Also, the stakes for the hostilities were perceived as incredibly important for the future of Japan. Japanese interests have been well established already, but as each painful victory followed another, war aims grew apace with the casualty lists. As conquests in Manchuria increased, Japanese leaders in both the press and government offices started to place more weight on a large war indemnity for Russia, the cession of Liao-yang peninsula, and rights for the Port Arthur-Harbin rail line.¹²⁸ Still, the focus on Japan's major political objective remained consistent throughout.

Japanese military leaders were forced to reassess their strategy throughout the conflict due to the vagaries of chance and accident on the battlefield. When Togo failed to destroy the Pacific Ocean Squadron at Port Arthur, he proved incapable of winning local control of the sea, a military objective that was vital to the overall success of the war. While he expended all efforts to either destroy the Russian vessels or block them permanently in the harbor, the mere presence of the Tsarist fleet restricted Togo's own mobility. The Russians took only partial advantage of this in the form of commerce raiding from the naval elements at Vladivostok. As Togo communicated this to the Imperial General Staff, General Kodama worked up a new plan to reduce the fleet from land.¹²⁹ The fortress had to fall before the Russians could reinforce the Pacific Fleet with the Baltic Fleet.

¹²⁷ Weinberger, "Uses of Military Power," 10.

¹²⁸ Tomion, 12.

¹²⁹ Simmons, 31-35.

Kodama initially allocated 80,000 troops to take Port Arthur quickly, thus diverting forces South briefly before linking back up with the main Japanese forces maneuvering for a decisive victory in the heart of Manchuria. He did not wish to expend much effort on the fort, he merely wanted the danger the enemy fleet posed eliminated. When this assault failed, Oyama committed ever-increasing forces for the ultimate reduction of Port Arthur. They did fail to take it quickly or efficiently but it was ultimately necessary to avoid threats to their command at sea.¹³⁰ He did this because it was clearly necessary for the overall attainment of the political object, and clear communication from his subordinates, peers in the Navy, and higher political leaders gave him the information he needed to make rational choices towards that end.¹³¹

Japanese leaders did start feeling the pinch of the misfortunes of war. Casualties were excessive and unsustainable after such victories such as the Sha-ho, Liao-yang, and finally Mukden. Japan was nominally the victor in all these battles, but the Russian Army was not destroyed and remained on an ever-improving line of communication. Oyama's Manchurian Army was stretching itself logistically every mile further they moved in pursuit of the decisive victory Japan desperately needed to conclude the conflict. Financially and materially the government was running out of options. Sandra Wilson concluded in her evaluation of Japanese politics that:

By the middle of 1905 ... both Yamagata and Katsura had come to the conclusion that the war must be stopped. Yamagata ... had conveyed this view to the Emperor and Katsura shortly after Japan's land victory at Mukden in March 1905. His judgment may have been decisively influenced by reports from military leaders in the field, who were urging the necessity for diplomatic action. The elder statesman Inoue Kaoru, financial advisor to

¹³⁰ Kirwan, 79-81.

¹³¹ There is some speculation that Togo was not completely honest in his assessment after the third unsuccessful attempt to block the harbor that the roads were blocked and that it was therefore safe for the Army to commence landing operations. Togo seems to have made his assessment based on the ineffectual defensive action of the Russian fleet to that time, and took the risk that the Russian fleet would not sortie. He did not, however, notify the Army that he was taking this risk, probably in the knowledge that they would delay the landings. See Warner, 294.

Katsura, had also reached the conclusion as early as November 1904 that an early end to the war was highly desirable, in his case on financial grounds.¹³²

Clearly, military leaders such as the pro-war Kodama and Oyama felt their duty was to advise the government to seek terms when they realized the political objective could not be further served or reached by military means alone.

It was highly important to the peace process that the Japanese Army remain postured for additional offensive action, even if it was militarily inadvisable. Using the threat to the Russians of further defeats on land, Japan wagered that their opponent as well as the rest of the world did not know their true financial and military state. All outside parties remained convinced of the superiority of Japanese military prowess until long after the ratification of the Treaty of Portsmouth.¹³³ President Roosevelt was also steadfast in his conviction that the Japanese held the upper hand in every way, voicing his certainty that they could drive the Russians off the Asiatic coast and back west to Lake Baikal.¹³⁴ However, he was certain that both sides needed peace and in a letter to his confidante Cecil Spring Rice, he noted the conditions under which it should come:

My feeling is that it is not to Japan's real interest to spend another year of bloody and costly war in securing eastern Siberia, which her people assure me she does not want, and then to find out that she either has to keep it and get no money indemnity, or else exchange it for a money indemnity which, however large, would probably not more than pay for the extra year's expenditure and loss of life ... Practically the only territorial concession they wish from Russia is Sakhalin [Island], to which in my judgment they are absolutely entitled.¹³⁵

The *genro* and the cabinet attempted through Kaneko to convince Roosevelt that the best chance for peace would be if he freely volunteered his services to broker a treaty, but were firm that

¹³² Wilson, 165.

¹³³ Esthus, 165. Even the Japanese people remained convinced that the country could sustain the fight until Russia was completely defeated. Only those at the top understood the limits of their national power.

¹³⁴ Tomion, 64-66.

¹³⁵ Morris, 396.

negotiations could not begin at the instigation of the Japanese. Finally, on 9 June Roosevelt did as the cabinet requested, and appealed to both sides to come to terms.¹³⁶ Neither side wished to be seen as asking for peace, but both needed it. Japan, however, was able to conceal this fact through the timely analysis of her vulnerability and through the open communications of political, diplomatic and military leaders.

The Russian leadership did not share the same level of mutual respect and open communication that pervaded the Japanese system during this time of crisis. Kuropatkin repeatedly counseled caution and a defensive strategy, while the Tsar and his ministers kept demanding victory on all fronts. Viceroy Alexiev, influenced by inaccurate reports from other sources, wished decisive action in every case. With a lack of unified command in the far east, effective action through was nearly impossible to create. Command of Port Arthur resided by default in General Stoessel, while Kuropatkin was in charge of the Manchurian Armies near Liao-Yang, with the fleet split between Port Arthur and Vladivostok.¹³⁷ It did not help that none of these men agreed on the proper course of action, and did not communicate either honestly or well with one another. Wasted activity and retreat was the result. Only after Port Arthur capitulated in January, the destruction of the Baltic Fleet, and the home front erupting in rebellion did the Tsar begin to consider peace. Effective communications were not a strong point of the Imperial Russian Government at any level--tactical, operational, or strategic.

7. Overwhelming moral acceptance of the nation.

A war should have a resonance throughout the population of a nation; it should be felt as the just and right thing to do by most of the country. The 1904 Japanese Imperial Rescript to the Army and Navy states:

¹³⁶ Dennett, 215.

The principal duty of soldiers is loyalty to Sovereign and Country. It is not probable that any one born in this country will be wanting in patriotism; but for soldiers this virtue is so essential that unless a man is strong in patriotism he will be unfitted for this service. The protection of the country and maintenance of its prestige must rest upon Our military and naval forces: their efficiency or deterioration must affect, for good or for ill, the fate of Our nation; and it is therefore your duty not to entangle yourselves with social matters or political questions, but strictly to confine yourselves to the observance of your principal duty, which is loyalty, remembering always that duty is heavier than a mountain (and so to be much regarded), while death is lighter than a feather (and therefore to be despised).¹³⁸

This document stipulated from the Emperor the standards of conduct for every Japanese soldier and sailor. The loyalty manifest within the rescript was reflected also within everyday Japanese society and made it easier for the government to draw on popular support. Overwhelming public support for a nation in crisis is an incredible asset, and the failure to receive such an asset can be calamitous indeed. Again Secretary Weinberger perhaps summed it up best when he wrote, “But policies and principles such as these require decisive leadership in both the executive and legislative branches of government, and they also require strong and sustained public support.”¹³⁹

Part of supplying that strong public support is the establishment of a clear and pressing threat to a national interest, and a unified government presenting a solid and reasonable method of dealing with that threat. The defense from that threat should resonate through a population. The Japanese, partly by the virtue of their culture, and partly by the way their leaders presented the war to them received the due bounty of that support. The Russians did none of the above, and continued mobilizing their population for war the same way they always had, by relying on blind patriotism and obedience to orders. For a time it worked, but failures on both nations parts caused serious ramifications in unrest. The Tsarists would pay for their inattention by the future loss of their government.

¹³⁷ Warner, 270-271.

¹³⁸ Tadayoshi Sakurai. *Human Bullets: A Soldier's Story of the Russo-Japanese War* (Lincoln Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 265.

The main problem with Japanese support for the war was in moderating its zealous character. Japanese nationalists were highly active within the government and national press and were key in influencing the opinions of the general public for the war. Most of the public opinion leaders began to change their attitudes to war with the Russia once the Manchurian evacuation failed to take place in 1903. Right wing nationalists agreed with the principle behind the preservation of Korea, and their support was able to weld a block of unity within the Diet. Most of the government's diplomatic and political dealings with the outside world were kept largely secret from its own population. Tokutomi Soho, a contemporary newspaper editor, recalled:

The Japanese authorities were more afraid of their own people than of the enemy. Only the officials in the government knew of the various internal weaknesses and overall vulnerability of the nation. They kept their knowledge strictly secret lest it have an adverse effect on the morale of its people. One may criticize the government's attitude for its lack of sincerity toward the people, but the actual situation was such that nobody could tell what might happen if the whole truth were revealed. The government, therefore, chose to keep whatever it could strictly confidential, even if later, when the truth came to be known, it had to contend with the people's indignities.¹⁴⁰

This failure to inform the public of the truth about the conduct of the war and the status of the military situation led to a creditability gap between the decision-makers, the lower governmental officials and the public itself. The public was kept ill informed of any but the most sanitized information. The Katsura cabinet made it an unofficial policy to evade any kind a parliamentary scrutiny when it came to either the Russo-Japanese negotiation or the war itself. When public opinion leaders and Diet officials mobilized effective criticism to the cabinet on its foreign and domestic policies, Katsura dissolved the House of Representatives on 11 December 1903, thus permitting the unhampered continuation of negotiations with Russia.¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ Weinberger, "Uses of Military Power," 11.

¹⁴⁰ Quoted in Okamoto, 126.

¹⁴¹ Takeuchi, 135-141.

It must be remembered that the Japanese public was not in favor of finding a compromise peace with Russia, with the right wing press urging the population to war immediately. The decision-makers, trapped within a system of their own design, chose to mute any effective display of negative opinion by clamping down on any information contrary to official positions. This technique worked very well while the war went their way and they could feed the press and public stories of their successes in the field and on the sea, but once the government reached the point that negotiations must start and peace found they faced a difficult dilemma. They became victims of their own propaganda. Knowing the true status of their forces in the field, and that the Russians were well capable of resuming actions against them in ever-strengthening numbers, they were forced to accept far less at the peace table than their public believed to be just. The right wing nationalists were outraged and protested vigorously, but in the end like much of the war itself, deals were cut in secret with party leaders to ensure compliance. Riots ensued in Japan when the treaty particulars became known in early September 1905, and martial law had to be declared in Tokyo.¹⁴² But they did not last, and the environment the decision-makers were able to construct allowed them to eliminate the negative parts of strong public opposition for much of the conflict while basking in reflective glow of its positive attributes.

The Russians faced a different kind of atmosphere entirely. Having already failed to establish in the mind of most of their public the standards of a vital national interest, Russian society also possessed a revolutionary core consisting in large part of its intelligentsia. Revolutionaries and activists had populated urban Russia for decades, and assassination of government officials was already a well-established occupation undertaken by many. Educated Russians believed for many years that their nation's time was coming, but failures in the Crimean War had dashed many hopes,

¹⁴² Wilson, 179-181.

and defeat after defeat in the east only seemed to highlight the corruption and unsuitability of the autocracy. Adrian Jones noted in his analysis of Russia, “As soon as the war went badly, Russian radicals cheered. There was the precedent of the Crimea and its aftermath, the Great Reforms. Immediately they could give dozens of reasons for the state’s failure.”¹⁴³ The socialists’ fell upon the failing war as the cause they needed to produce the popular uprising of the proletariat.

Still, events only simmered until the fall of Port Arthur in January 1905, when they began to boil. The wretched living conditions of the average Russian combined with the activities of political radicals sowing dissent.¹⁴⁴ Nicholas reacted to all this much as his father had. Bloody Sunday, 9 January 1905, was the result. After the mass strikes of workers in St. Petersburg in December, demonstrators began to collect near the city in January to protest once again. Once the peaceful crowd moved closer to the Winter Palace, it ran into armed troops who began to fire on them. 200 were killed and 800 wounded. The resultant public uprising, including the assassination of Grand Duke Aleksandrovich, forced Nicholas to convene a parliamentary body and begin a constitutional experiment.¹⁴⁵ The rebellion at home, combined with the naval disaster at Tshushima Straits, were the issues that propelled the Tsar to seek peace with Japan. Russian failure on the home front was a major reason for her failure to prosecute the war. Rebellion and mutiny began to spread to the fleet, first with the Potëmkin and other naval units, and then to the Army.¹⁴⁶ Peace became a dire necessity to avoid total ruin.

CONCLUSION

¹⁴³ Adrian Jones. “East and West Befuddled: Russian Intelligentsia Responses to the Russo-Japanese War,” in *The Russo-Japanese War in Cultural Perspective*, Ed. by David Wells and Sandra Wilson (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 145.

¹⁴⁴ Pipes, 37-39.

¹⁴⁵ Lincoln, 290-292.

¹⁴⁶ Lincoln, 293-300.

The Russo-Japanese war holds distinct lessons for historians and national decision-makers alike. It was a remarkable event in human history that demonstrates two totally different ways of waging war, one the antithesis of the other. In addition to the seven critical points mentioned previously, which should clarify Secretary Weinberger's Doctrine, one is struck throughout the war by the largely human element and personal character of strategy and diplomacy. The Japanese were able to make their largely informal and extra-constitutional system of government work because it was composed of highly experienced and dedicated men who understood their objective and were willing to sacrifice themselves and their personal agendas to accomplish the task. Their mission, though the particulars were not shared in a democratic process, resonated within the parliamentary body and throughout their public. They conducted their war with rationality and experience one would not have expected of an industrial state so young.

It is important to remember that the Japanese, while successful beyond their imaginings in this war from beginning to end, would be far less successful in their next war, largely because they failed to apply the lessons hard won during this conflict. The same government that carefully and rationally chose war against Russia for good reasons and clear objectives, instigated a war against the United States in 1941 using largely flawed information, assumptions, and little careful understanding of the political, social, diplomatic, military or economic situation. The result would be richly deserved disaster while being served by the exact same form of government they possessed in 1905. The difference between the two was wise and rational leaders exercising their power with skill and deliberation that could steer a nation around the potential pitfalls incumbent in war.

A democratic nation could never risk the kind of overt manipulation and censorship that the effort to maintain popular support required in this war. This tactic would be unlikely to work at all in an era of nearly unrestricted personal freedom and instant communications. Even if it could be made

to work the inevitable disillusionment fallout would be far worse than the credibility gap created between the American government and its people during the Vietnam War. The only answer to the problem is the guarantee of that crucial national public support, itself provided only by an issue that resonates through the hearts of the American people and delivers the courage to see a difficult problem through to the end. The Japanese public only forgave their leadership after it was discovered that they had achieved their ultimate objective.

All of Secretary Weinberger's six criteria seem to have been met by the Japanese government of widely differing individuals. Clarified by these seven points drawn from an analysis of the war, the validity and usefulness of Weinberger's Doctrine is highlighted yet again:

1. A state should have a significant stake in war.
2. Know how to end your war before you begin.
3. Know what you want to achieve.
4. Know yourself and your enemy.
5. Define your operating environment.
6. Talk and *listen* to one another.
7. Overwhelming moral acceptance of the nation.

These criteria, as were Secretary Weinberger's in 1985, are for the consumption and use of the civilian and military decision-makers in America's government.

The Russo-Japanese war has meaning for the United States even after the terrible events of 11 September 2001. These criteria are not cookie molds for decision-makers to cling to; they must adapt to be effective. As General Colin Powell said, "We are obligated to lead. If the free world is to harvest the hope and fulfill the promise that our great victory in the cold war has offered us, America must shoulder the responsibility of its power. The last best hope of earth has no other

choice. We must lead.”¹⁴⁷ There will be times when the United States has no choice but to commit military forces to a less than optimal situation. “Teacup wars” present difficult choices and often no clearly identifiable national interest, blurring the lines of national security and values-driven commitments.¹⁴⁸ Humanitarian and peacekeeping missions often fall into this category. The world is not a clearly defined environment, as any soldier or marine in the operating forces will quickly confirm, but it is the duty of the civilian and military decision-makers to know the costs in violating one of these criteria and to carefully and rationally choose the best alternatives that will reach the desired political objective. Leaders must carefully distinguish and weigh what is best for the nation and the popular will, no matter the cost to themselves personally and politically.

There are important distinctions to be made for coalition war fighting and partners, and the careful attention that must be placed in the maintenance of public and national support. What is most important in them though is the careful way the Japanese decision-makers structured their strategy by carefully reasoning the objectives to be reached and delineating the ways and means to each one. The Japanese carefully struck a balance between their political and military objectives by understanding their environment and the tools they had to influence the world around them. The United States government, while possessing a structure arguable as chaotic and arcane as the Japanese of the Russo-Japanese War, is more carefully balanced than outside observers would seem to believe. In the past America has been able to absorb the costs of her mistakes, but this will not always be so. The United States civil-military leadership must learn how to effectively wage war in this most modern of eras. A glimpse back at the evolutions of the Japanese may just provide that lesson.

¹⁴⁷ C. Powell, “U.S. Forces: Challenges Ahead,” *Foreign Affairs* 71, (Winter 1992-1993), 33.

¹⁴⁸ David Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace: Bush, Clinton, and the Generals* (New York: Scribner, 2001), 74-75.

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Appendix A

The Weinberger Doctrine and Powell Corollary

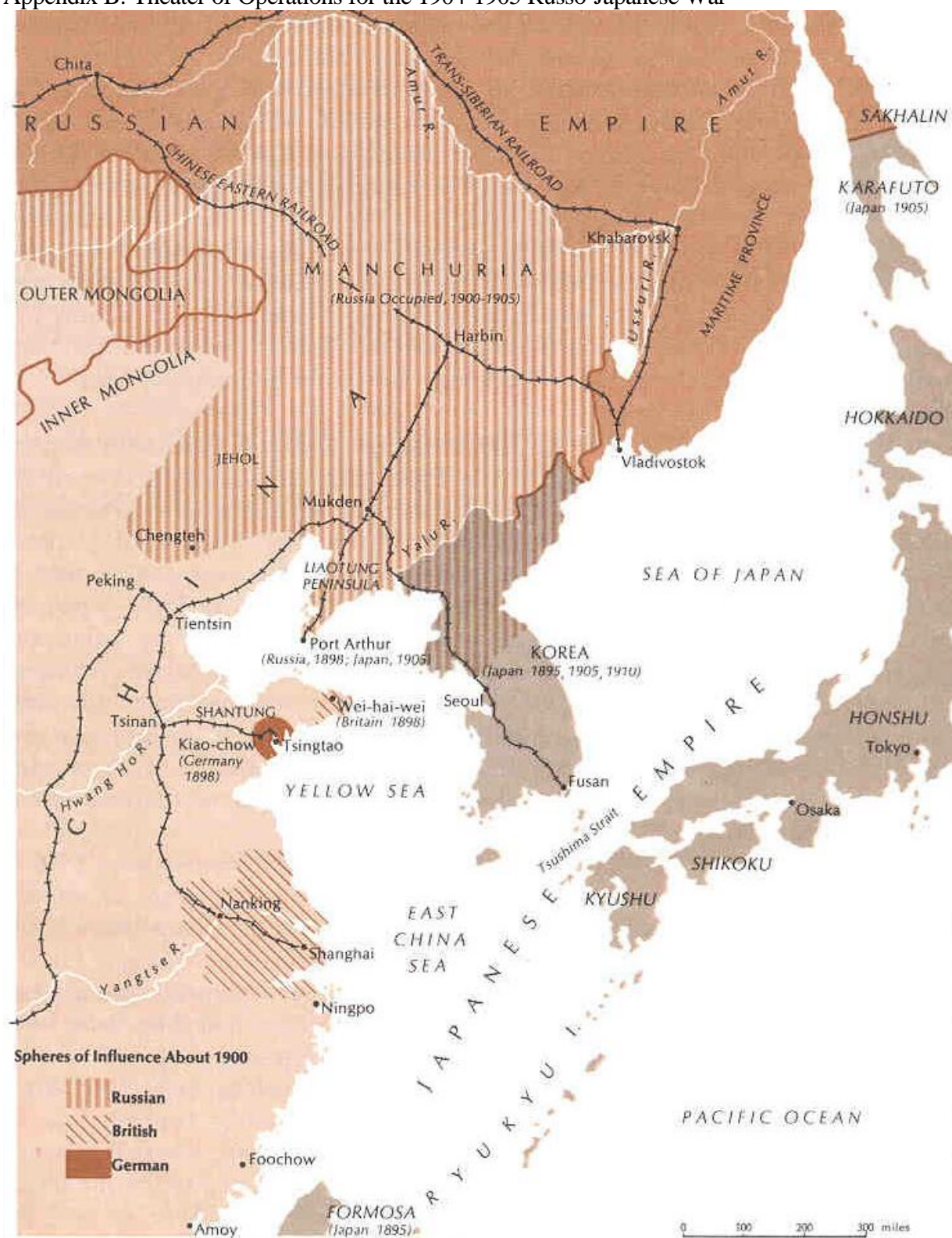
Weinberger Doctrine:

1. In our vital interest or that of our allies
2. Clear intent to win
3. Clearly defined political and military objectives
4. Continually reassessed
5. Support of the American people
6. Be a last resort

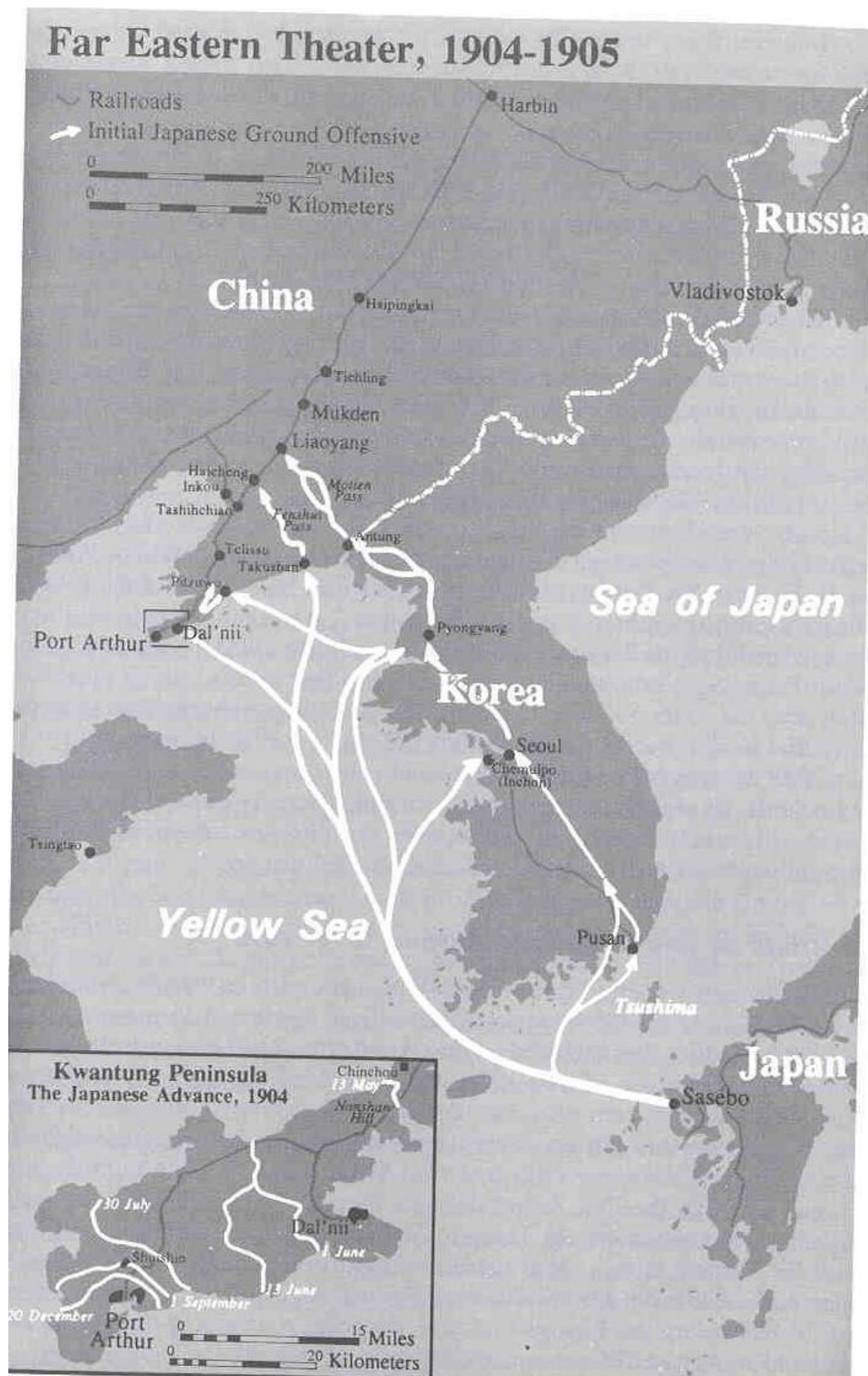
Powell Corollary

1. Have a clear political objective and stick to it
2. Use all the force necessary and do not apologize for going in big if that is what it takes (decisive force)

Appendix B: Theater of Operations for the 1904-1905 Russo-Japanese War



Source: Palmer, R. R. & Colton, Joel, *A History of the Modern World*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978), 639



Source: Bruce W. Menning, *Bayonets Before Bullets: The Imperial Russian Army, 1861-1914*, (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992), 156

Appendix C Russo-Japanese War Chronology

19 May 1891- construction started on the Russian Trans-Siberian railway.

15 Sep 1894-10 April 1895- widespread rebellion breaks out in Korea and both China and Japan dispatch troops. After Chinese quell the rebellion, Japan refuses to withdraw until peace was placed on a “secure foundation.” Reforms were thus demanded in Korea and China refused provoking the Sino-Japanese war. War started with the battle of Ping yang on 15 September 1894. Quick 8 month campaign follows with Chinese suing for peace on 30 March 1895. On 10 April 1895 the Treaty of Shimonoseki signed in Japan, China recognizes the “full and complete independence of Korea”, cedes Formosa, the Pescadores, and the Liao-tung peninsular to Japan, with an agreement to pay 200,000,000 taels (25,160,256 pounds) as war indemnity. Until the conditions are met Japan retains the port of Wei-hai-wei. Before the treaty can be ratified, Russia intervenes with a coalition of Germany and France. They present Japan with a note “suggesting” to Japan to forgo her claim to the territory on mainland China. Japan “yielded to the dictates of magnanimity, and accepted the advice of the three powers.” She received 39,000,000 taels (4m pounds) for the retrocession of the peninsular.

27 March 1898- Russians conclude a convention with China whereby Port Arthur, Ta-lien-wan and adjacent waters were leased for 25 years. Russians immediately commence building of railway from Harbin to the tip of the Liao-yang peninsula.

12 June 1900- Boxer Rebellion- Russians occupy Manchuria to quell the rebellion.

30 January 1902-Anglo-Japanese Alliance (5 year agreement) concluded; each power contracted to, in the event of either being involved in a war with a 3rd power in defense of its interests in the extreme East, to maintain strict neutrality and use its powers to prevent other powers from joining in the hostilities against it's ally; and if any power should join in hostilities, to come to each others assistance and conduct the war together.

08 April 1902- China and Russia sign an agreement that the Russian would withdraw from Manchuria completely, while China would protect the railway and Russian subjects, evacuation to be completed in 3 six-month stages or in 18 months from signing of the agreement.

Oct 1902- Russian evacuation begins with the southwest portion of Mukden province restored. The second phase was not conducted as agreed. On 23 June 1903, Japan decides to negotiate, during an Imperial Conference drafting a note for the Russian Government. The negotiations proceed poorly.

Jan 12 1904- Second Imperial Conference- Emperor, Cabinet and genro decide to send final note for peace to the Russians

Feb 4 3rd Japanese Imperial Conference- Decision for War

Feb 8 Togo's fleet strikes Port Arthur at night with inconclusive results, Russians nevertheless taken by surprise and the initiative taken away.

Feb 10 Formal declaration of war by both countries.

Feb 24-25 Japanese attempt blocking operation at Port Arthur with 5 block ships. Limited success, with only one block ship sunk in the roads. Russians prove unable or unwilling to put to sea and passively allow themselves to be stopped up in the harbor without the roads being blocked.

Apr 13 Both fleets meet after a long night of groping through fog & rain. First Russian breakout attempt-- Flagship *Petropalovsk* hit a mine and sinks in minutes while rushing to aid survivors. Admiral Makharov is on board and with his loss the Russians fall back on Port Arthur.

May 1 Battle of the Yalu.

May 4 General Oku begins landing his 2nd Army at Pit-tzu-wo and Ta-lien-wan on the Liao-Yang peninsula. Totally unopposed landing except for minefields.

May 25-26 Battle of Nanshan.

June 14-15 Battle of Te-li-ssu.

June 23 Admiral Witgeft takes the 1st Pacific Ocean Squadron to sea. Squares off against Japanese fleet. Both sides prepare for general fleet engagement but avoid decisive engagement. They fail to impede the flow of Japanese replacements at Dalny .

July 26 General Baron Nogi launches a strong attack on Russian left between Nytonsu & Ho-shan at Port Arthur. After a long fight the whole defense began to crumple until the entire range of outer works from Nytonsu to the railway was in Japanese hands. The Port Arthur Garrison is isolated on the 27th of July.

August 10 Tsarist First Pacific Ocean Squadron attempts a breakout from Port Arthur, and is delayed by mechanical breakdowns. Togo narrowly misses his decisive opportunity to crush the Tsarist squadron, but both fleets badly battered and the Russians are still bottled up in Port Arthur.

Aug 25-26 Another effort to take Namako-yama (Long Hill) at Port Arthur fails after surprise is compromised with very heavy losses. Defense to this point had cost 3,000 casualties and inflicted 15,000 on the Japanese. 8,000 more were on the sick list, and 16,000 past that were suffering from beriberi. Replacements from Dalny made Japanese losses good, while there was no such respite for the defenders.

Aug 25- 3 Sep Battle of Liao-Yang.

Oct 9-10 Battle of the Sha-ho. .

- Oct 15 Russian 3rd Pacific Ocean Squadron (Baltic Fleet) sets sail from St. Petersburg for the reinforcement of the 1st Pacific Ocean Squadron at Port Arthur.
- Nov 26-30 New offensive at Port Arthur. No significant gains. Attack starts on 203-meter hill after a day long bombardment on the 27 Nov and the hill holds after three desperate assaults, and the fighting continues through the end of the month.
- Dec 5 Japanese take 203 meter hill. Japanese now have a clear view for their artillery to the harbor and set to work demolishing the 1st Pacific Ocean Squadron before the eyes of the defenders. Either destroyed by shells or scuttled by their own captains, the squadron ceased to exist.
- Jan 1 1905 General Stoessel decides to capitulate without the agreement of his officers, and the ability of the garrison to sustain the fight. There is not enough time, however, as Stossel capitulates on 2 Jan. 878 officers, 23,251 EM, and 8,956 sailors march into captivity. Russian total casualties 31,306. Japanese 57,780, with 33,769 sick with over 60% of those being from beriberi.
- Feb 20- 9 Mar Battle of Mukden. Japanese total strength 315,000, Russian 333,000, The Russians are able to make a successful retreat, and the Japanese too exhausted to turn their victory into another Sedan. Russian losses 59,800 men, 80 guns and many stores. Japanese losses from all sources 53,500. Once the Russians retreat all along their line and reassemble around Hai-ping-kai as far back as the Sangari River. There is no attempt made at a counter-offensive, both sides being much too exhausted.
- May 27-28 The Battle of Tsushima Straits. Of the 12 Tsarist capital ships, 8 sank, with *Oryol* and *Emperor Nicholas I* and 2 coastal defense ships surrendered. 4 cruisers were sunk, one scuttled, and 3 interned in Manila. Togo lost 3 torpedo boats and 700 men. The Russians lost 4,800 WIA & KIA, and 6,000 captured.
- Jun 9 The US offers mediation to end the conflict (with Japanese prodding). Japan afforded the right to lease the southern part of Manchuria from China, and was ceded the lower half of Sakhalin Island, with the right to fish the Pacific Siberian waters. The Japanese paramount position in Korea is recognized. After the considerable political pressure of the US was brought to bear, their claim to a war indemnity was dropped.
- Aug 28 4th Japanese Imperial Conference. Decision for Peace, Cabinet drops requirement for indemnity. Allows resolution of war and signature of treaty.
- Sep 5 Treaty signed at Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Once details of Japanese concession come to light in Japanese press, rioting ensues throughout the major industrial cities of Japan. Martial law is declared, but order swiftly returns.

Appendix D: The Japanese Government 1903-1905.

The Japanese Government 1903-1905

